時代劇画
JIDAIGEKI COMIC SERIES

柳生連也武芸帖

YAGYU RENYA BUGEICHO

時代劇シリーズ
HISTORY OF JAPAN
COMIC
SPECIAL SELECTION

とみ新蔵

4

SPコミックス

柳生連也武芸帖

YAGYU RENYA,
LEGEND OF THE
SWORD MASTER

4

とみ新蔵

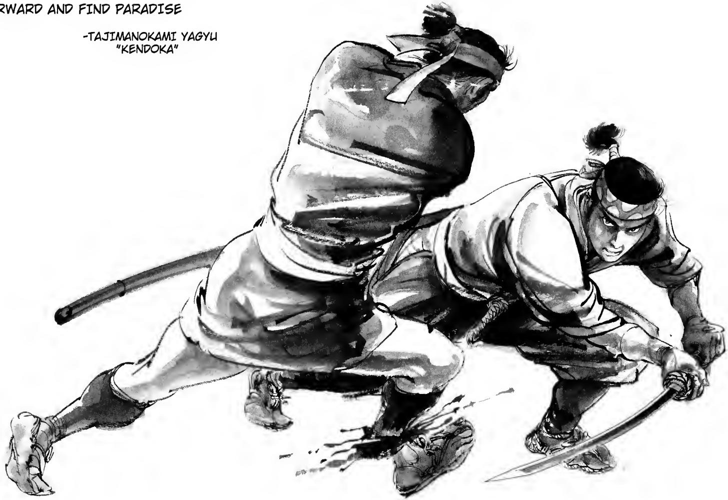
SHINZOU
TOMI

CROSSING SWORDS

BENEATH THE BLADE IS THE PATH TO HELL

STEP FORWARD AND FIND PARADISE

-TAJIMANOKAMI YAGYU
"KENDOKA"



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LEGEND OF THE SWORD MASTER

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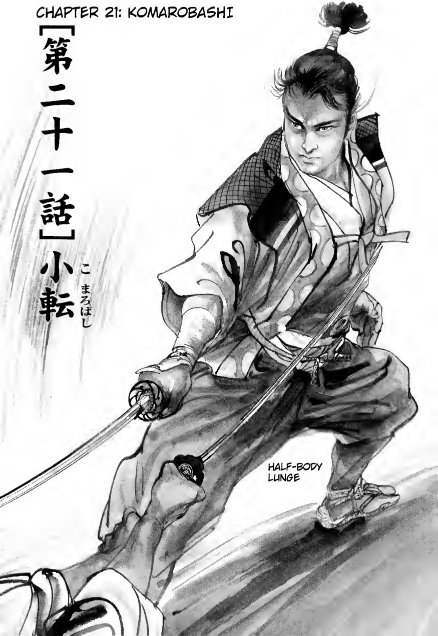
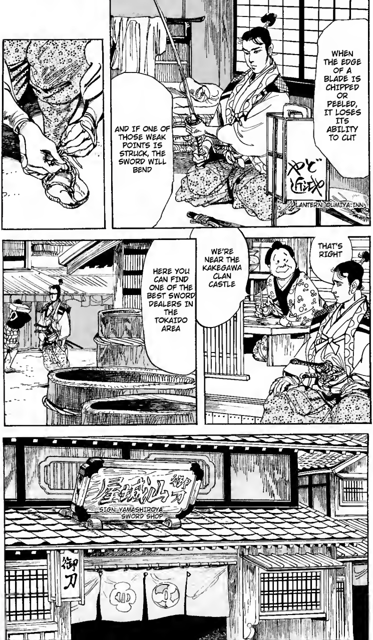
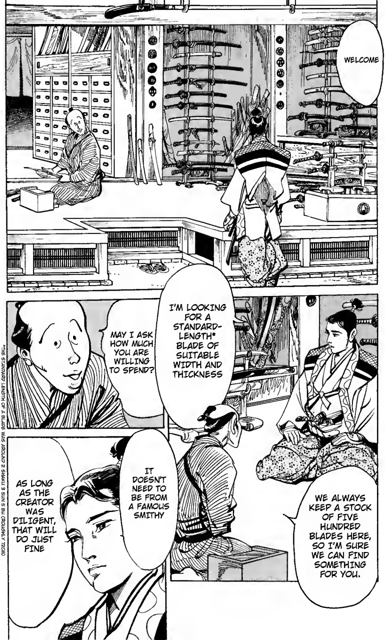
PUBLISHED IN COMIC RAN

CHAPTER 21: KOMAROBASHI

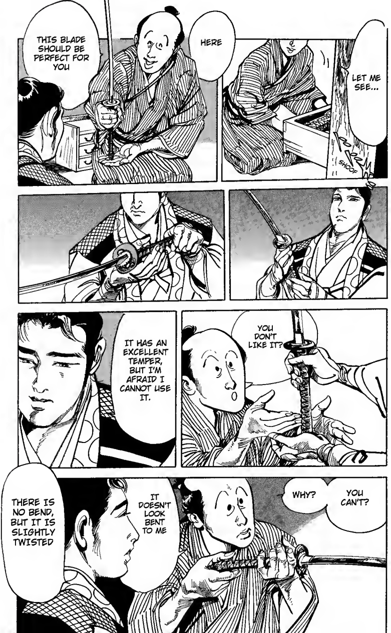
「第二十一話」小転（こまろばし）

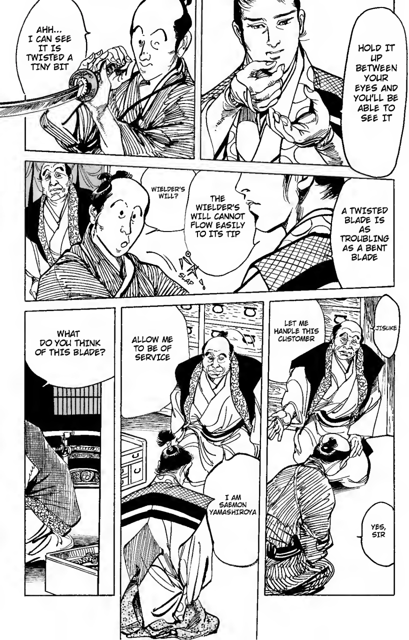

HALF-BODY LUNGE

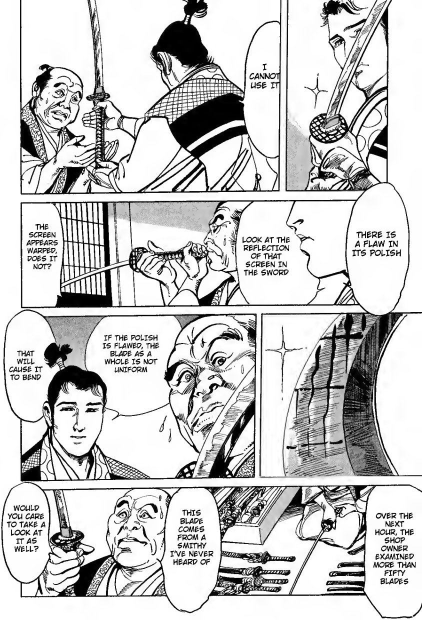

WHEN THE EDGE OF A BLADE IS CHIPPED OR PEELED, IT LOSES ITS ABILITY TO CUT
AND IF ONE OF THOSE WEAK POINTS IS STRUCK, THE SWORD WILL BEND
やど
LANTERN: OUMIYA INN
THAT'S RIGHT
WE'RE NEAR THE KAKEGAWA CLAN CASTLE
HERE YOU CAN FIND ONE OF THE BEST SWORD DEALERS IN THE TOKAIDO AREA
御刀 山城屋
SIGN: YAMASHIROYA SWORD SHOP
御刀

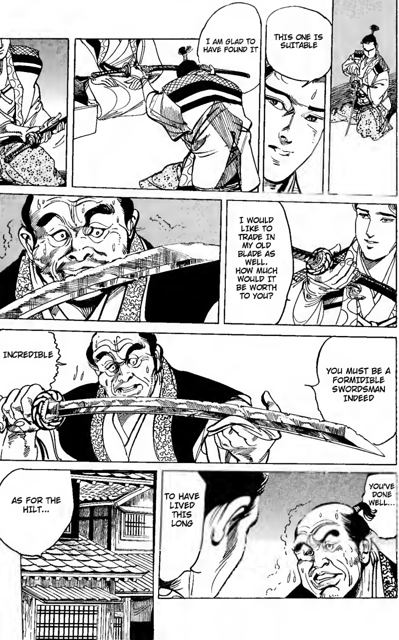

WELCOME
I'M LOOKING FOR A STANDARD-LENGTH* BLADE OF SUITABLE WIDTH AND THICKNESS
MAY I ASK HOW MUCH YOU ARE WILLING TO SPEND?
IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE FROM A FAMOUS SMITHY
AS LONG AS THE CREATOR WAS DILIGENT, THAT WILL DO JUST FINE
WE ALWAYS KEEP A STOCK OF FIVE HUNDRED BLADES HERE, SO I'M SURE WE CAN FIND SOMETHING FOR YOU.

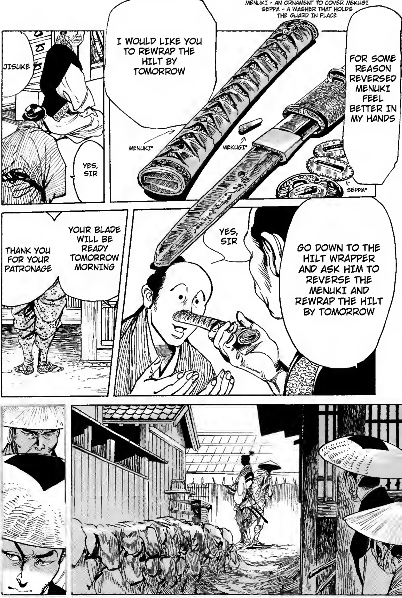
*THE STANDARD LENGTH OF A BLADE WAS AROUND 2 SHAKU 3 SUN 5 BU (ROUGHLY 72CM)


THIS BLADE SHOULD BE PERFECT FOR YOU
HERE
LET ME SEE...
SHOOF
IT HAS AN EXCELLENT TEMPER, BUT I'M AFRAID I CANNOT USE IT.
YOU DON'T LIKE IT?
YOU CAN'T?
WHY?
IT DOESN'T LOOK BENT TO ME
THERE IS NO BEND, BUT IT IS SLIGHTLY TWISTED

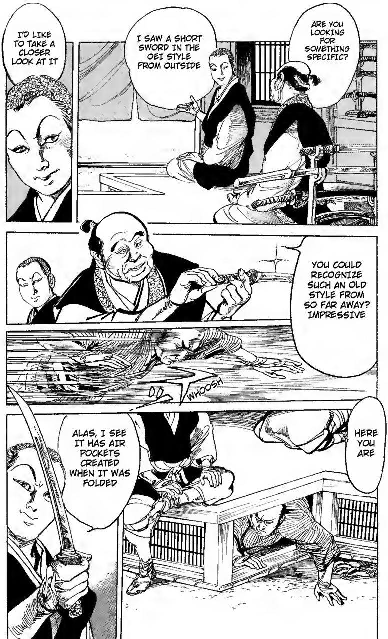

HOLD IT UP BETWEEN YOUR EYES AND YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SEE IT
AHH... I CAN SEE IT IS TWISTED A TINY BIT
A TWISTED BLADE IS AS TROUBLING AS A BENT BLADE
THE WIELDER'S WILL CANNOT FLOW EASILY TO ITS TIP
WIELDER'S WILL?
SLAP
JISUKE
LET ME HANDLE THIS CUSTOMER
YES, SIR
ALLOW ME TO BE OF SERVICE
I AM SAEMON YAMASHIROYA
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS BLADE?

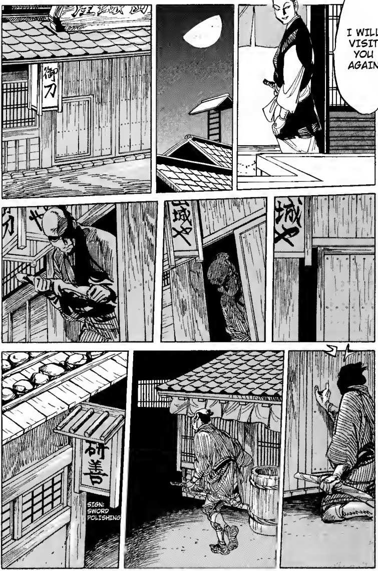

I CANNOT USE IT
THERE IS A FLAW IN ITS POLISH
LOOK AT THE REFLECTION OF THAT SCREEN IN THE SWORD
THE SCREEN APPEARS WARPED, DOES IT NOT?
IF THE POLISH IS FLAWED, THE BLADE AS A WHOLE IS NOT UNIFORM
THAT WILL CAUSE IT TO BEND
OVER THE NEXT HOUR, THE SHOP OWNER EXAMINED MORE THAN FIFTY BLADES
THIS BLADE COMES FROM A SMITHY I'VE NEVER HEARD OF
WOULD YOU CARE TO TAKE A LOOK AT IT AS WELL?

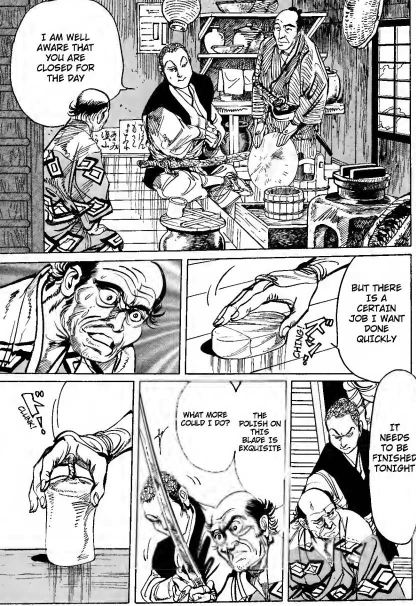

THIS ONE IS SUITABLE
I AM GLAD TO HAVE FOUND IT
I WOULD LIKE TO TRADE IN MY OLD BLADE AS WELL. HOW MUCH WOULD IT BE WORTH TO YOU?
YOU MUST BE A FORMIDIBLE SWORDSMAN INDEED
INCREDIBLE
YOU'VE DONE WELL...
TO HAVE LIVED THIS LONG
AS FOR THE HILT...

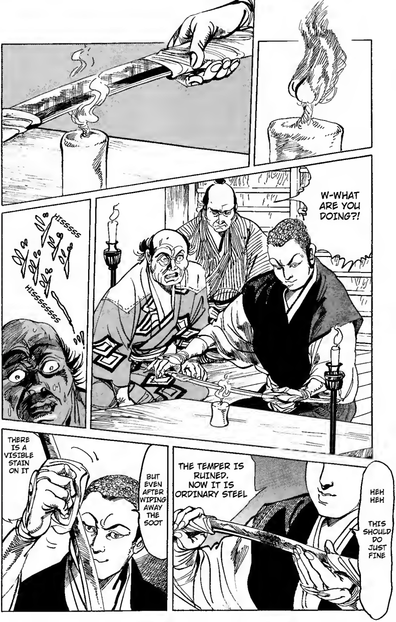

*MEKUGI - A BAMBOO PEG TO FIX THE BLADE TO THE HILT
MENUKI - AN ORNAMENT TO COVER MEKUGI
SEPPA - A WASHER THAT HOLDS THE GUARD IN PLACE

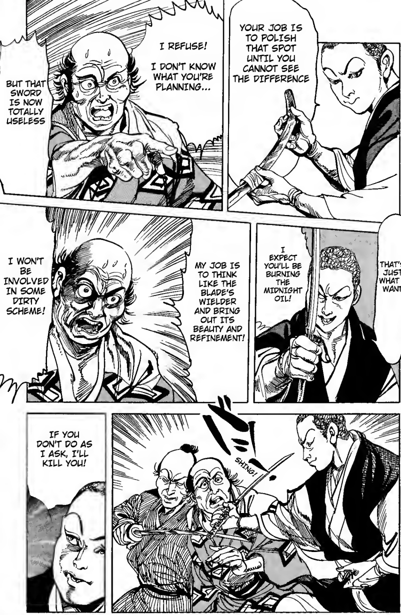
JISUKE
I WOULD LIKE YOU TO REWRAP THE HILT BY TOMORROW
YES, SIR
MENUKI*
MEKUGI*
SEPPA*
FOR SOME REASON REVERSED MENUKI FEEL BETTER IN MY HANDS
GO DOWN TO THE HILT WRAPPER AND ASK HIM TO REVERSE THE MENUKI AND REWRAP THE HILT BY TOMORROW
YES, SIR
YOUR BLADE WILL BE READY TOMORROW MORNING
THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATRONAGE

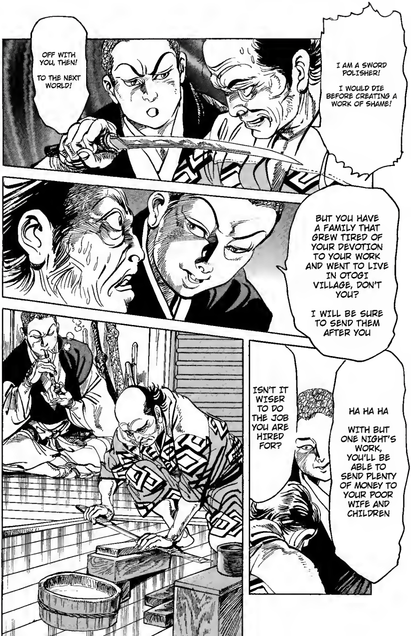

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR SOMETHING SPECIFIC?
I SAW A SHORT SWORD IN THE OEI STYLE FROM OUTSIDE
I'D LIKE TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT IT
YOU COULD RECOGNIZE SUCH AN OLD STYLE FROM SO FAR AWAY? IMPRESSIVE
WHOOSH
HERE YOU ARE
ALAS, I SEE IT HAS AIR POCKETS CREATED WHEN IT WAS FOLDED

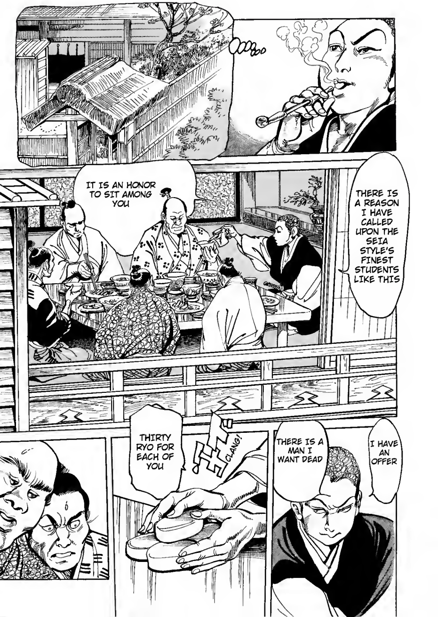

御刀
I WILL VISIT YOU AGAIN
城や
研善
SIGN: SWORD POLISHING

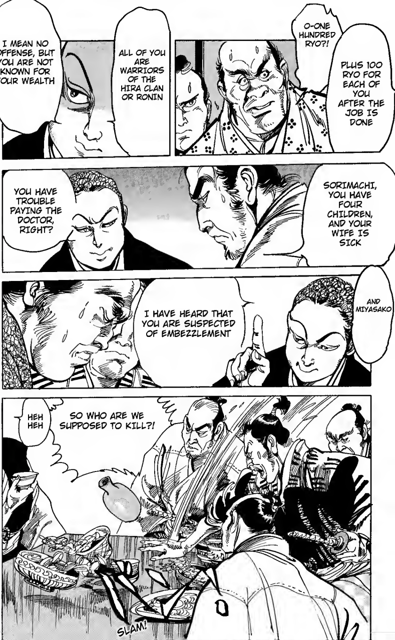

I AM WELL AWARE THAT YOU ARE CLOSED FOR THE DAY
BUT THERE IS A CERTAIN JOB I WANT DONE QUICKLY
CHING!
CLINK!
WHAT MORE COULD I DO?
THE POLISH ON THIS BLADE IS EXQUISITE
IT NEEDS TO BE FINISHED TONIGHT

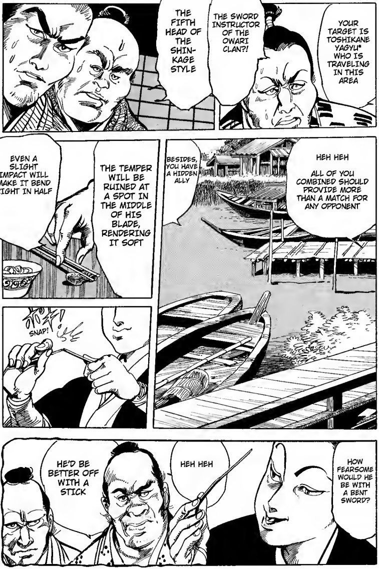

W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
HISSSSS
HISSSSSSSS
HEH HEH
THIS SHOULD DO JUST FINE
THE TEMPER IS RUINED. NOW IT IS ORDINARY STEEL
BUT EVEN AFTER WIPING AWAY THE SOOT
THERE IS A VISIBLE STAIN ON IT


YOUR JOB IS TO POLISH THAT SPOT UNTIL YOU CANNOT SEE THE DIFFERENCE
I REFUSE!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING...
BUT THAT SWORD IS NOW TOTALLY USELESS
THAT'S JUST WHAT I WANT
I EXPECT YOU'LL BE BURNING THE MIDNIGHT OIL!
MY JOB IS TO THINK LIKE THE BLADE'S WIELDER AND BRING OUT ITS BEAUTY AND REFINEMENT!
I WON'T BE INVOLVED IN SOME DIRTY SCHEME!
SHING!
IF YOU DON'T DO AS I ASK, I'LL KILL YOU!

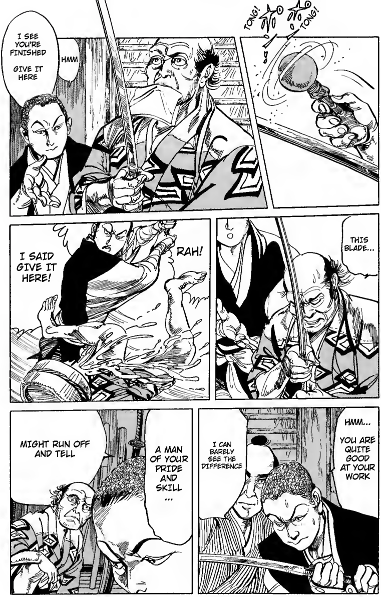

I AM A SWORD POLISHER! I WOULD DIE BEFORE CREATING A WORK OF SHAME!
OFF WITH YOU, THEN! TO THE NEXT WORLD!
BUT YOU HAVE A FAMILY THAT GREW TIRED OF YOUR DEVOTION TO YOUR WORK AND WENT TO LIVE IN OTOGI VILLAGE, DON'T YOU? I WILL BE SURE TO SEND THEM AFTER YOU
HA HA HA WITH BUT ONE NIGHT'S WORK, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SEND PLENTY OF MONEY TO YOUR POOR WIFE AND CHILDREN
ISN'T IT WISER TO DO THE JOB YOU ARE HIRED FOR?

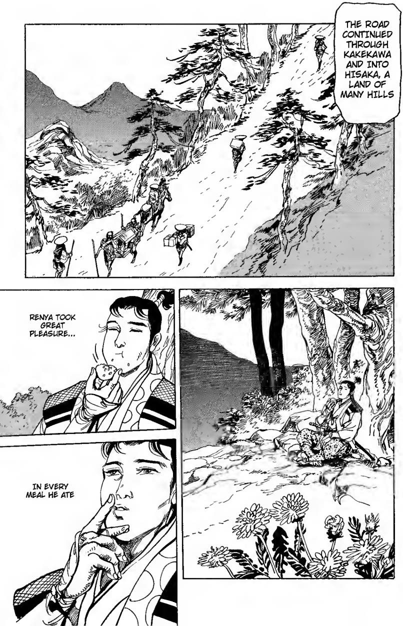

THERE IS A REASON I HAVE CALLED UPON THE SEIA STYLE'S FINEST STUDENTS LIKE THIS
IT IS AN HONOR TO SIT AMONG YOU
I HAVE AN OFFER
THERE IS A MAN I WANT DEAD
CLANG!
THIRTY RYO FOR EACH OF YOU

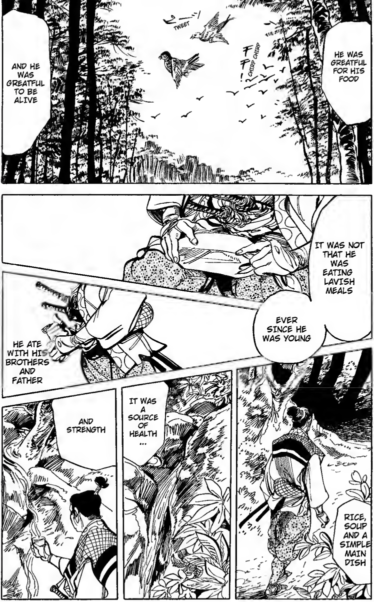

O-ONE HUNDRED RYO?!
PLUS 100 RYO FOR EACH OF YOU AFTER THE JOB IS DONE
ALL OF YOU ARE WARRIORS OF THE HIRA CLAN OR RONIN
I MEAN NO OFFENSE, BUT YOU ARE NOT KNOWN FOR YOUR WEALTH
SORIMACHI, YOU HAVE FOUR CHILDREN, AND YOUR WIFE IS SICK
YOU HAVE TROUBLE PAYING THE DOCTOR, RIGHT?
AND MIYASAKO
I HAVE HEARD THAT YOU ARE SUSPECTED OF EMBEZZLEMENT
SO WHO ARE WE SUPPOSED TO KILL?!
HEH HEH
SLAM!

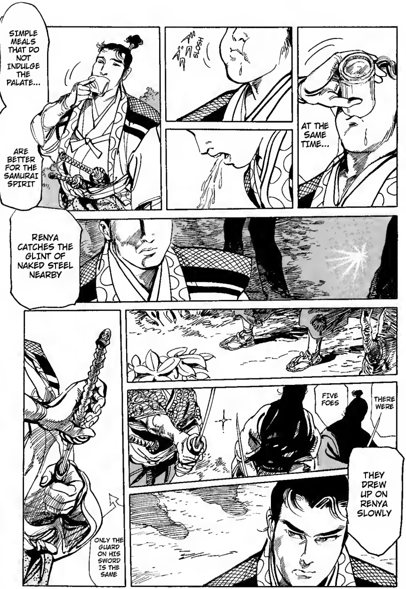

YOUR TARGET IS TOSHIKANE YAGYU* WHO IS TRAVELING IN THIS AREA
THE SWORD INSTRUCTOR OF THE OWARI CLAN?!
THE FIFTH HEAD OF THE SHINKAGE STYLE
HEH HEH
ALL OF YOU COMBINED SHOULD PROVIDE MORE THAN A MATCH FOR ANY OPPONENT
BESIDES, YOU HAVE A HIDDEN ALLY
THE TEMPER WILL BE RUINED AT A SPOT IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS BLADE, RENDERING IT SOFT
EVEN A SLIGHT IMPACT WILL MAKE IT BEND RIGHT IN HALF
SNAP!
HOW FEARSOME WOULD HE BE WITH A BENT SWORD?
HEH HEH
HE'D BE BETTER OFF WITH A STICK

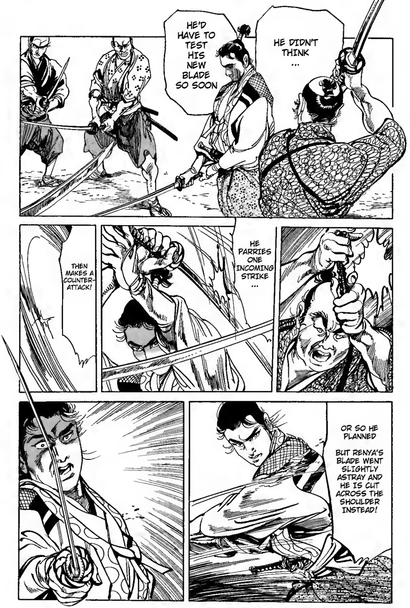
*TOSHIKANE YAGYU WOULD BECOME RENYASAI YAGYU

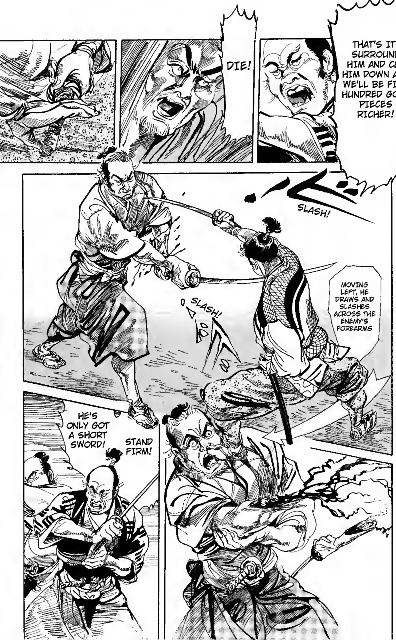

TONG!
TONG!
I SEE YOU'RE FINISHED
GIVE IT HERE
HMM
THIS BLADE...
I SAID GIVE IT HERE!
RAH!
HMM...
YOU ARE QUITE GOOD AT YOUR WORK
I CAN BARELY SEE THE DIFFERENCE
A MAN OF YOUR PRIDE AND SKILL ...
MIGHT RUN OFF AND TELL

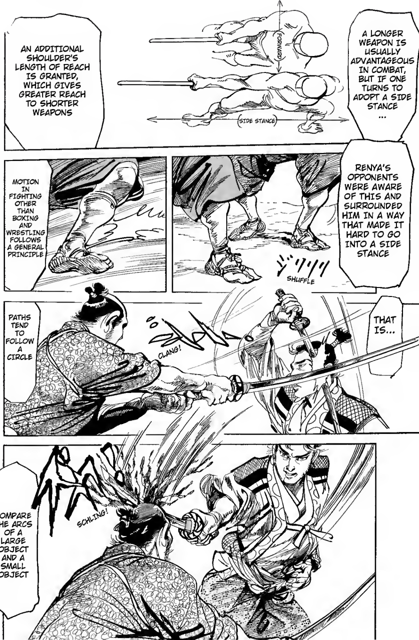

THE ROAD CONTINUED THROUGH KAKEKAWA AND INTO HISAKA, A LAND OF MANY HILLS
RENYA TOOK GREAT PLEASURE...
IN EVERY MEAL HE ATE

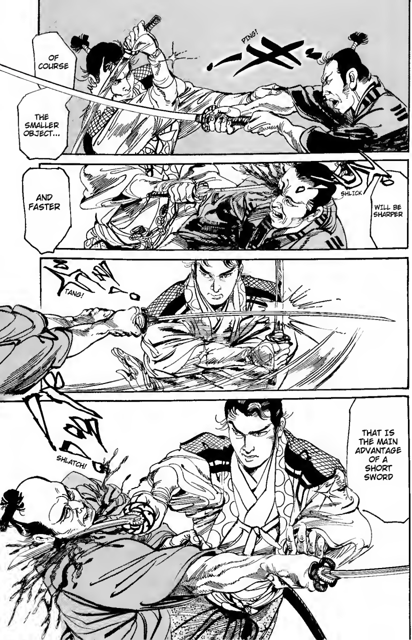

HE WAS GREATFUL FOR HIS FOOD
CHIRP CHIRP
TWEET
AND HE WAS GREATFUL TO BE ALIVE
IT WAS NOT THAT HE WAS EATING LAVISH MEALS
EVER SINCE HE WAS YOUNG
HE ATE WITH HIS BROTHERS AND FATHER
RICE, SOUP AND A SIMPLE MAIN DISH
IT WAS A SOURCE OF HEALTH ...
AND STRENGTH

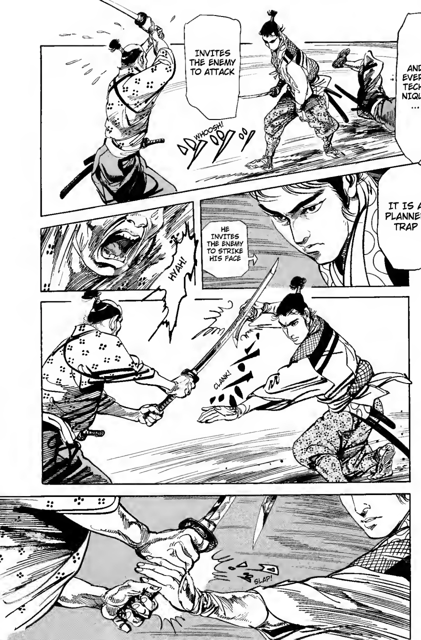

SIMPLE MEALS THAT DO NOT INDULGE THE PALATE...
ARE BETTER FOR THE SAMURAI SPIRIT
SLOSH
AT THE SAME TIME...
RENYA CATCHES THE GLINT OF NAKED STEEL NEARBY
THERE WERE
FIVE FOES
THEY DREW UP ON RENYA SLOWLY
ONLY THE GUARD ON HIS SWORD IS THE SAME

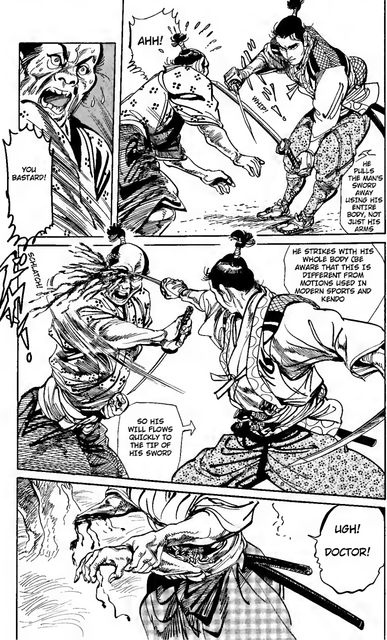

HE DIDN'T THINK ...
HE'D HAVE TO TEST HIS NEW BLADE SO SOON
HE PARRIES ONE INCOMING STRIKE ...
THEN MAKES A COUNTER-ATTACK!
OR SO HE PLANNED
BUT RENYA'S BLADE WENT SLIGHTLY ASTRAY AND HE IS CUT ACROSS THE SHOULDER INSTEAD!

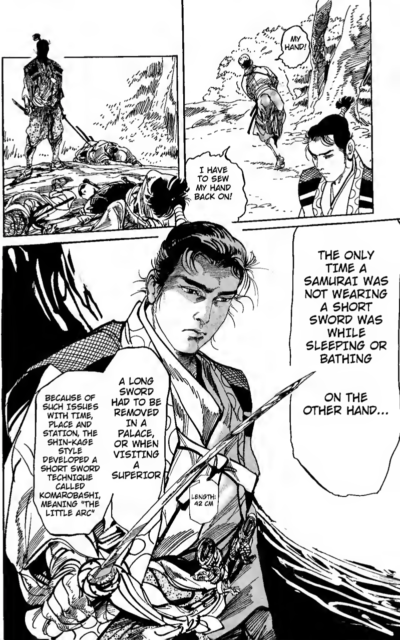

DIE!
THAT'S IT! SURROUND HIM AND CUT HIM DOWN AND WE'LL BE FIVE HUNDRED GOLD PIECES RICHER!
SLASH!
MOVING LEFT, HE DRAWS AND SLASHES ACROSS THE ENEMY'S FOREARMS
SLASH!
HE'S ONLY GOT A SHORT SWORD!
STAND FIRM!


A LONGER WEAPON IS USUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS IN COMBAT, BUT IF ONE TURNS TO ADOPT A SIDE STANCE ...
FORWARD
SIDE STANCE
AN ADDITIONAL SHOULDER'S LENGTH OF REACH IS GRANTED, WHICH GIVES GREATER REACH TO SHORTER WEAPONS
RENYA'S OPPONENTS WERE AWARE OF THIS AND SURROUNDED HIM IN A WAY THAT MADE IT HARD TO GO INTO A SIDE STANCE
ジリリリ
SHUFFLE
MOTION IN FIGHTING OTHER THAN BOXING AND WRESTLING FOLLOWS A GENERAL PRINCIPLE
THAT IS...
CLANG!
PATHS TEND TO FOLLOW A CIRCLE
SCHLING!
COMPARE THE ARCS OF A LARGE OBJECT AND A SMALL OBJECT


OF COURSE
THE SMALLER OBJECT...
PING!
AND FASTER
SHLICK
WILL BE SHARPER
TANG!
SHLATCH!
THAT IS THE MAIN ADVANTAGE OF A SHORT SWORD


AND EVERY TECHNIQUE ...
INVITES THE ENEMY TO ATTACK
WHOOSH!
IT IS A PLANNED TRAP
HE INVITES THE ENEMY TO STRIKE HIS FACE
HYAH!
CLANK!
SLAP!

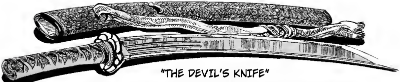

AHH!
WHIP!
HE PULLS THE MAN'S SWORD AWAY USING HIS ENTIRE BODY, NOT JUST HIS ARMS
YOU BASTARD!
HE STRIKES WITH HIS WHOLE BODY (BE AWARE THAT THIS IS DIFFERENT FROM MOTIONS USED IN MODERN SPORTS AND KENDO
SCHLATCH!
SO HIS WILL FLOWS QUICKLY TO THE TIP OF HIS SWORD
UGH!
DOCTOR!


MY HAND!
I HAVE TO SEW MY HAND BACK ON!
THE ONLY TIME A SAMURAI WAS NOT WEARING A SHORT SWORD WAS WHILE SLEEPING OR BATHING
ON THE OTHER HAND...
A LONG SWORD HAD TO BE REMOVED IN A PALACE, OR WHEN VISITING A SUPERIOR
BECAUSE OF SUCH ISSUES WITH TIME, PLACE AND STATION, THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE DEVELOPED A SHORT SWORD TECHNIQUE CALLED KOMAROBASHI, MEANING "THE LITTLE ARC"
LENGTH: 42 CM

LATER IN LIFE, RENYA WOULD HAVE A CAREFULLY CRAFTED SHORT SWORD MADE BY A SMITH IN OWARI

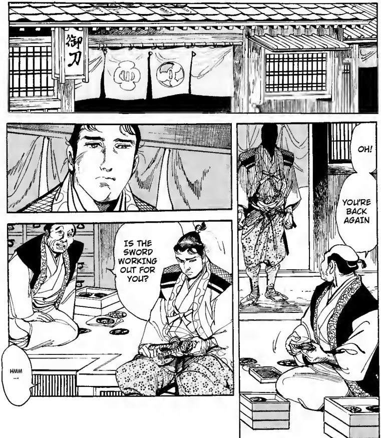
IT WOULD BE KNOWN AS "THE DEVIL'S KNIFE" AND IT STILL EXISTS TODAY

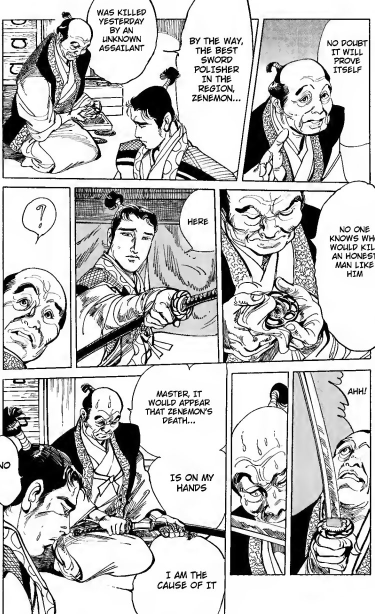
IN THAT YOU CAN READ RENYA'S INSISTENCE ON THE VALUE OF SHORT SWORDS

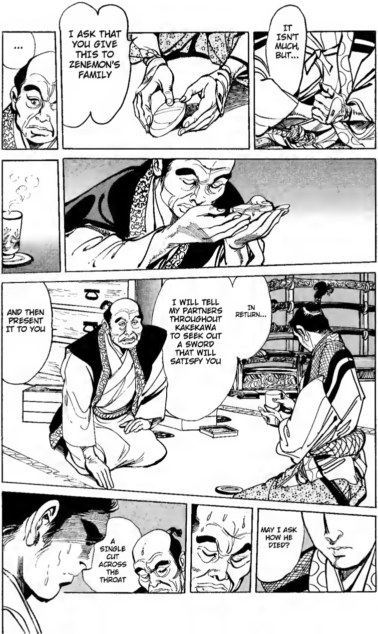


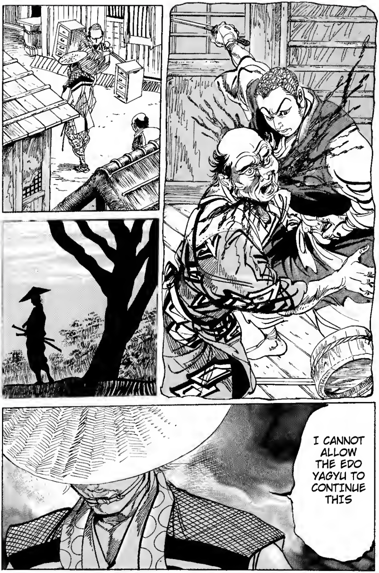
"THE DEVIL'S KNIFE"

LENGTH: 41 CENTIMETERS FACE: KIRIHA-ZUKURI REVERSE: SHINOGI-ZUKURI

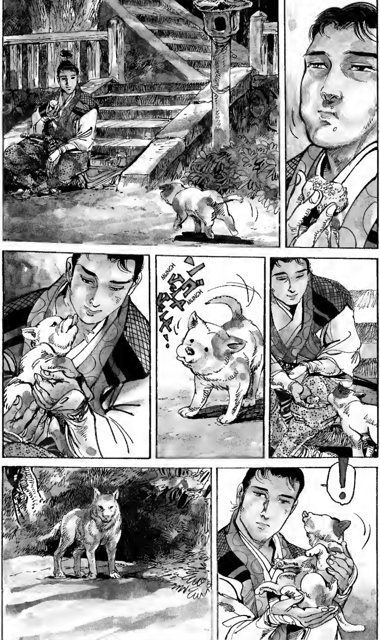

御刀
OH!
YOU'RE BACK AGAIN
IS THE SWORD WORKING OUT FOR YOU?
HMM ...


NO DOUBT IT WILL PROVE ITSELF
BY THE WAY, THE BEST SWORD POLISHER IN THE REGION, ZENEMON...
WAS KILLED YESTERDAY BY AN UNKNOWN ASSAILANT
NO ONE KNOWS WHO WOULD KILL AN HONEST MAN LIKE HIM
HERE
?
AHH!
MASTER, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT ZENEMON'S DEATH...
IS ON MY HANDS
NO
I AM THE CAUSE OF IT


IT ISN'T MUCH, BUT...
I ASK THAT YOU GIVE THIS TO ZENEMON'S FAMILY
...
IN RETURN...
I WILL TELL MY PARTNERS THROUGHOUT KAKEKAWA TO SEEK OUT A SWORD THAT WILL SATISFY YOU
AND THEN PRESENT IT TO YOU
MAY I ASK HOW HE DIED?
A SINGLE CUT ACROSS THE THROAT

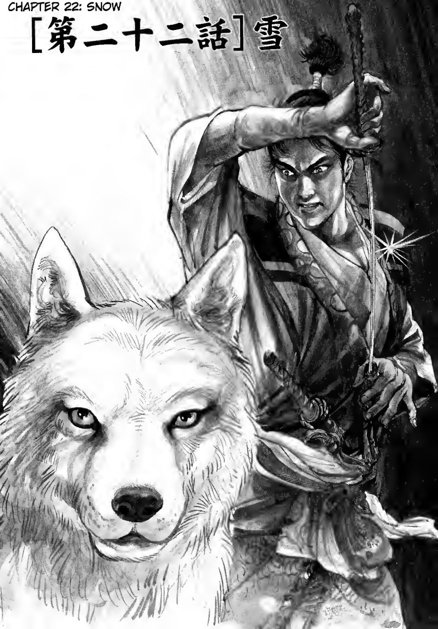

I CANNOT ALLOW THE EDO YAGYU TO CONTINUE THIS

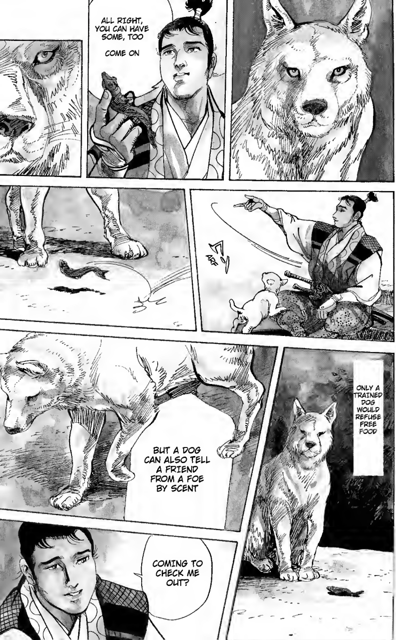
● CHAPTER 21 - FIN ●

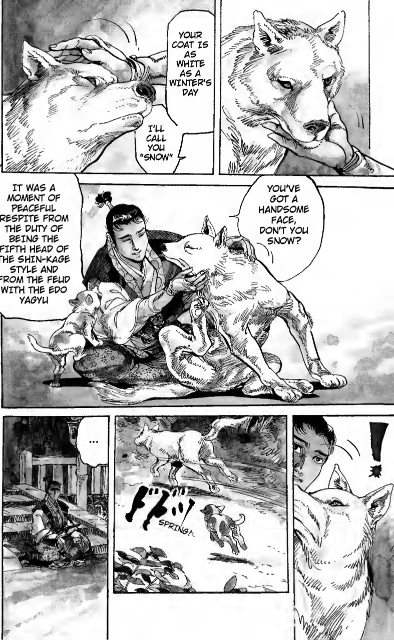

MUNCH
MUNCH
!

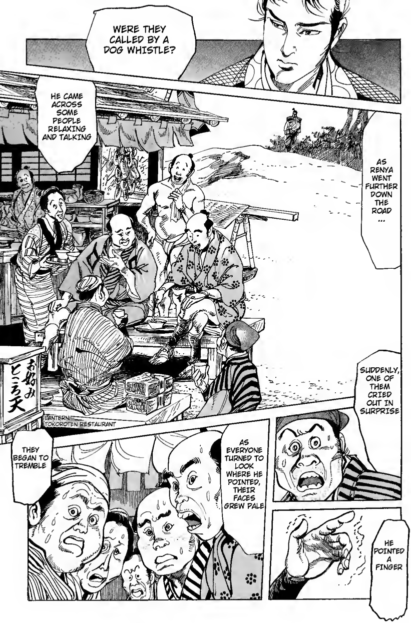
CHAPTER 22: SNOW

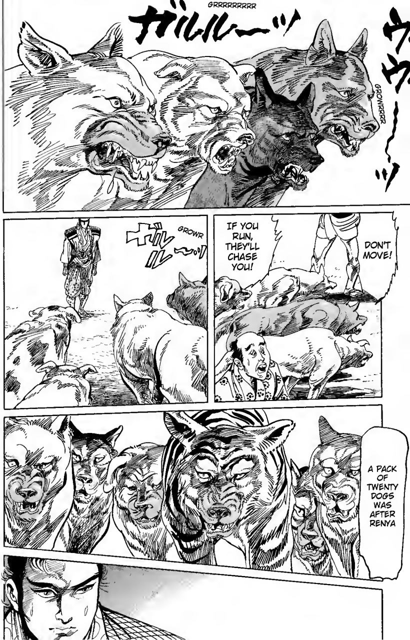
[第二十二話] 雪

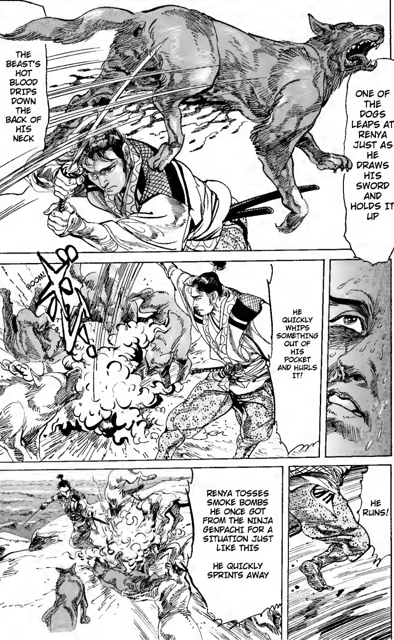


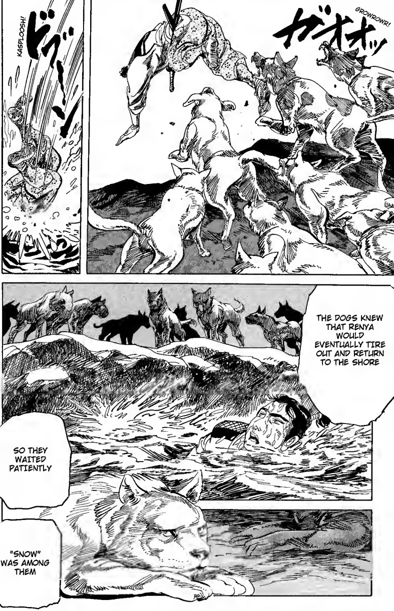

ALL RIGHT, YOU CAN HAVE SOME, TOO
COME ON
ARF
ONLY A TRAINED DOG WOULD REFUSE FREE FOOD
BUT A DOG CAN ALSO TELL A FRIEND FROM A FOE BY SCENT
COMING TO CHECK ME OUT?

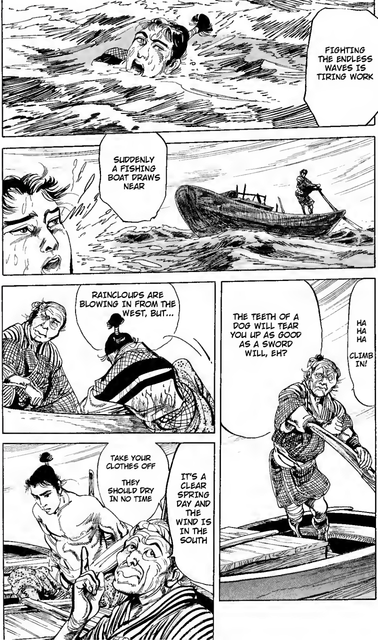

YOUR COAT IS AS WHITE AS A WINTER'S DAY
I'LL CALL YOU "SNOW"
YOU'VE GOT A HANDSOME FACE, DON'T YOU SNOW?
IT WAS A MOMENT OF PEACEFUL RESPITE FROM THE DUTY OF BEING THE FIFTH HEAD OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE AND FROM THE FEUD WITH THE EDO YAGYU
!
ドドッ
SPRING!
...

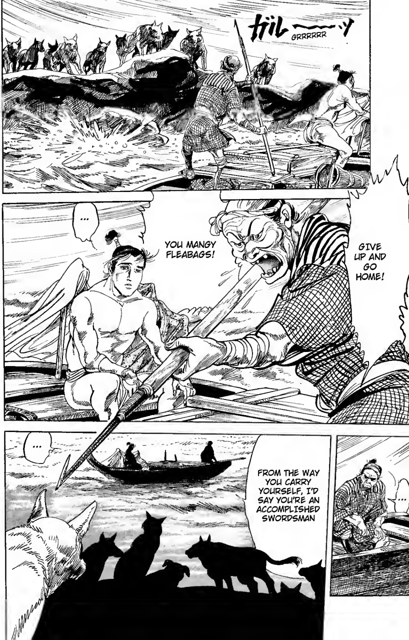

WERE THEY CALLED BY A DOG WHISTLE?
AS RENYA WENT FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD ...
HE CAME ACROSS SOME PEOPLE RELAXING AND TALKING
お好み
ところ天
LANTERN: TOKOROTEN RESTAURANT
SUDDENLY, ONE OF THEM CRIED OUT IN SURPRISE
HE POINTED A FINGER
AS EVERYONE TURNED TO LOOK WHERE HE POINTED, THEIR FACES GREW PALE
THEY BEGAN TO TREMBLE

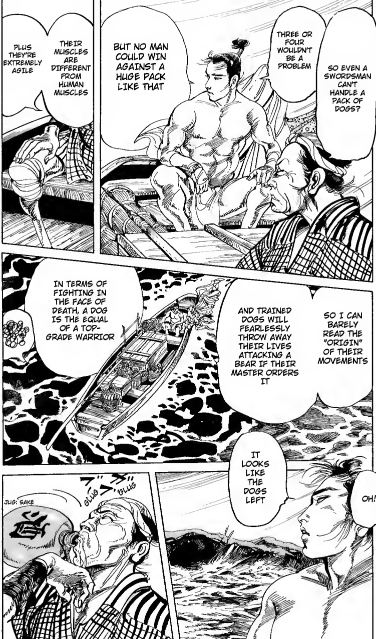

ウウーッ
GROWRRR
ガルルーッ
GRRRRRRRRR
DON'T MOVE!
IF YOU RUN, THEY'LL CHASE YOU!
ガルル〜ッ
GROWR
A PACK OF TWENTY DOGS WAS AFTER RENYA

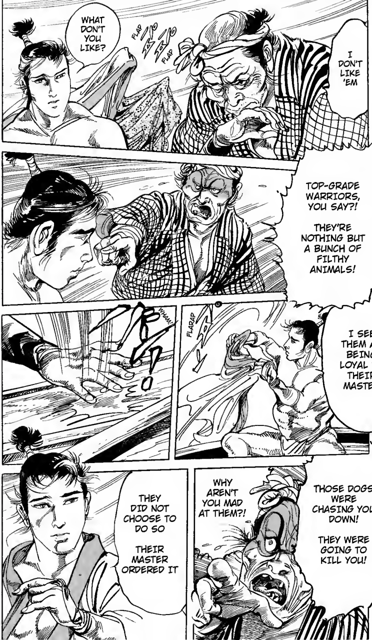

ONE OF THE DOGS LEAPS AT RENYA JUST AS HE DRAWS HIS SWORD AND HOLDS IT UP
THE BEAST'S HOT BLOOD DRIPS DOWN THE BACK OF HIS NECK
HE QUICKLY WHIPS SOMETHING OUT OF HIS POCKET AND HURLS IT!
BOOM!
HE RUNS!
RENYA TOSSES SMOKE BOMBS HE ONCE GOT FROM THE NINJA GENPACHI FOR A SITUATION JUST LIKE THIS
HE QUICKLY SPRINTS AWAY

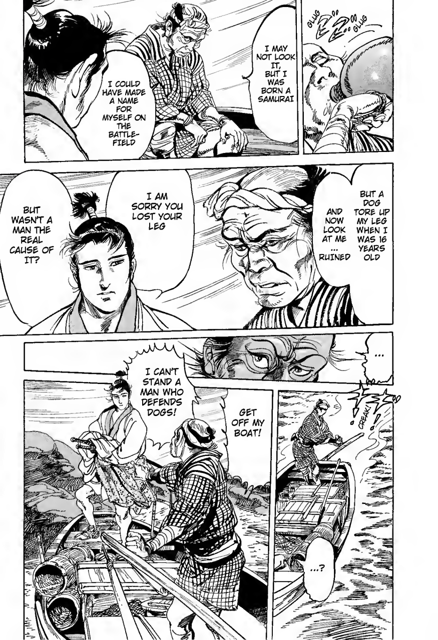

ガオオッ
GROWROWR!
ドヴーン
KASPLOOSH!
THE DOGS KNEW THAT RENYA WOULD EVENTUALLY TIRE OUT AND RETURN TO THE SHORE
SO THEY WAITED PATIENTLY
"SNOW" WAS AMONG THEM

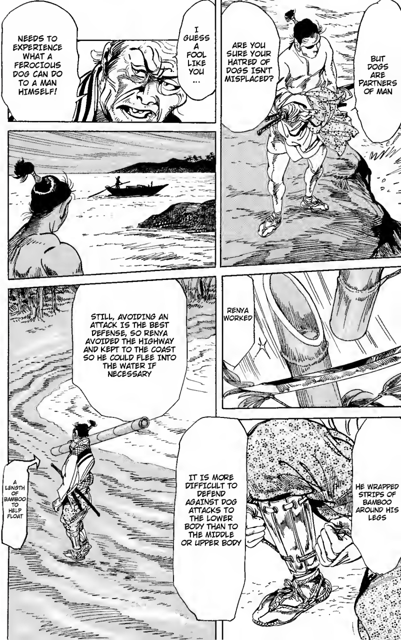

FIGHTING THE ENDLESS WAVES IS TIRING WORK
SUDDENLY A FISHING BOAT DRAWS NEAR
THE TEETH OF A DOG WILL TEAR YOU UP AS GOOD AS A SWORD WILL, EH?
HA HA HA
CLIMB IN!
RAINCLOUDS ARE BLOWING IN FROM THE WEST, BUT...
IT'S A CLEAR SPRING DAY AND THE WIND IS IN THE SOUTH
TAKE YOUR CLOTHES OFF
THEY SHOULD DRY IN NO TIME

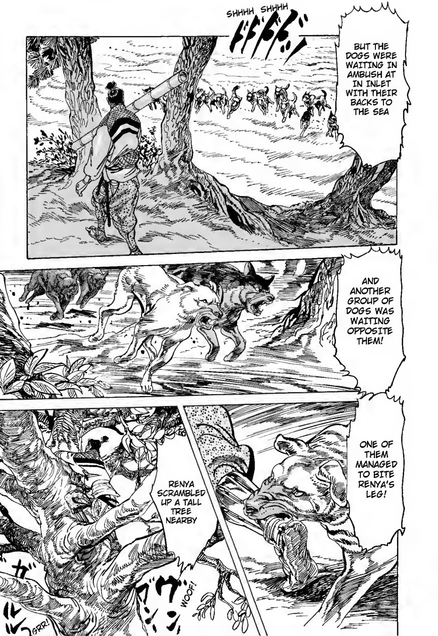

ガル～～ッ
GRRRRRR
GIVE UP AND GO HOME!
YOU MANGY FLEABAGS!
...
...
FROM THE WAY YOU CARRY YOURSELF, I'D SAY YOU'RE AN ACCOMPLISHED SWORDSMAN
...

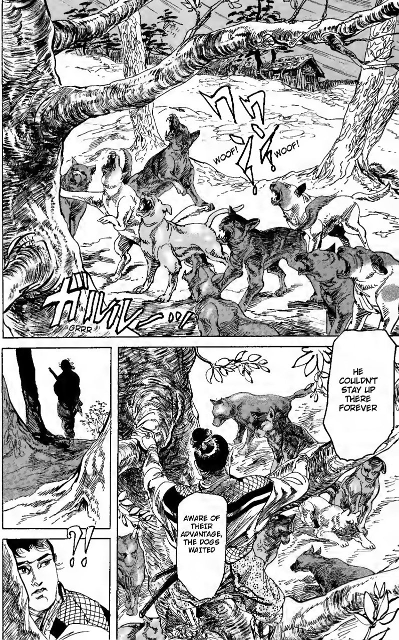

SO EVEN A SWORDSMAN CAN'T HANDLE A PACK OF DOGS?
THREE OR FOUR WOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM
BUT NO MAN COULD WIN AGAINST A HUGE PACK LIKE THAT
THEIR MUSCLES ARE DIFFERENT FROM HUMAN MUSCLES
PLUS THEY'RE EXTREMELY AGILE
SO I CAN BARELY READ THE "ORIGIN" OF THEIR MOVEMENTS
AND TRAINED DOGS WILL FEARLESSLY THROW AWAY THEIR LIVES ATTACKING A BEAR IF THEIR MASTER ORDERS IT
IN TERMS OF FIGHTING IN THE FACE OF DEATH, A DOG IS THE EQUAL OF A TOP-GRADE WARRIOR
OH!
IT LOOKS LIKE THE DOGS LEFT
GLUG 'GLUG
JUG: SAKE

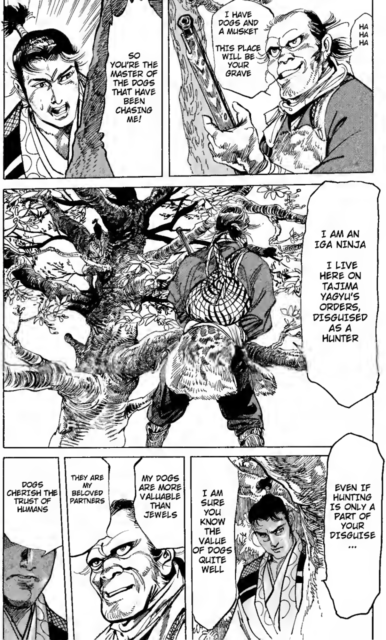

I DON'T LIKE 'EM
FLAP
FLAP
WHAT DON'T YOU LIKE?
TOP-GRADE WARRIORS, YOU SAY?!
THEY'RE NOTHING BUT A BUNCH OF FILTHY ANIMALS!
I SEE THEM AS BEING LOYAL TO THEIR MASTER
FLARAP
WHAM!
THOSE DOGS WERE CHASING YOU DOWN!
THEY WERE GOING TO KILL YOU!
WHY AREN'T YOU MAD AT THEM?!
THEY DID NOT CHOOSE TO DO SO
THEIR MASTER ORDERED IT

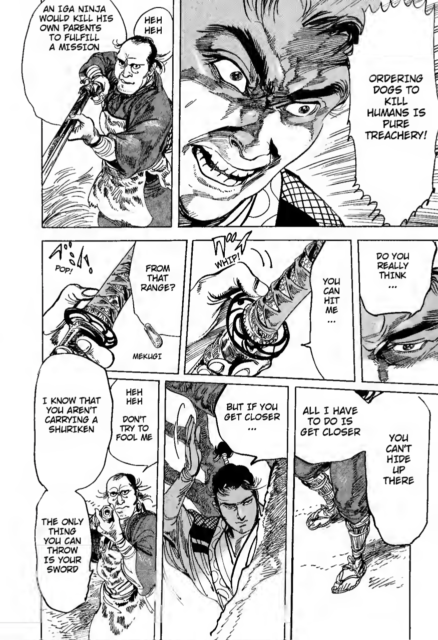

GLUG
GLUG
I MAY NOT LOOK IT, BUT I WAS BORN A SAMURAI
I COULD HAVE MADE A NAME FOR MYSELF ON THE BATTLE-FIELD
BUT A DOG TORE UP MY LEG WHEN I WAS 16 YEARS OLD
AND NOW LOOK AT ME ... RUINED
I AM SORRY YOU LOST YOUR LEG
BUT WASN'T A MAN THE REAL CAUSE OF IT?
...
I CAN'T STAND A MAN WHO DEFENDS DOGS!
GET OFF MY BOAT!
CREAK!
...?

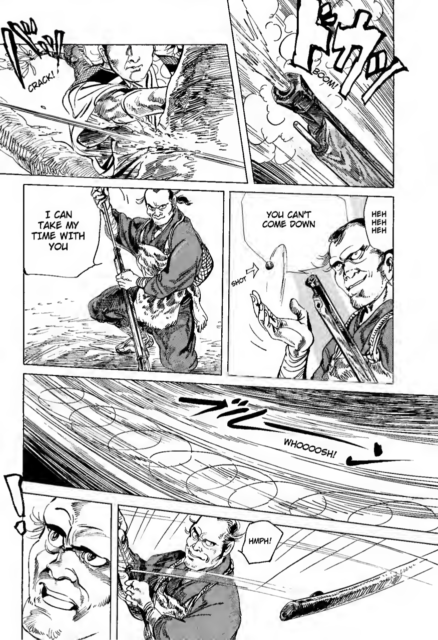

BUT DOGS ARE PARTNERS OF MAN
ARE YOU SURE YOUR HATRED OF DOGS ISN'T MISPLACED?
I GUESS A FOOL LIKE YOU ...
NEEDS TO EXPERIENCE WHAT A FEROCIOUS DOG CAN DO TO A MAN HIMSELF!
STILL, AVOIDING AN ATTACK IS THE BEST DEFENSE, SO RENYA AVOIDED THE HIGHWAY AND KEPT TO THE COAST SO HE COULD FLEE INTO THE WATER IF NECESSARY
RENYA WORKED
A LENGTH OF BAMBOO TO HELP FLOAT
HE WRAPPED STRIPS OF BAMBOO AROUND HIS LEGS
IT IS MORE DIFFICULT TO DEFEND AGAINST DOG ATTACKS TO THE LOWER BODY THAN TO THE MIDDLE OR UPPER BODY

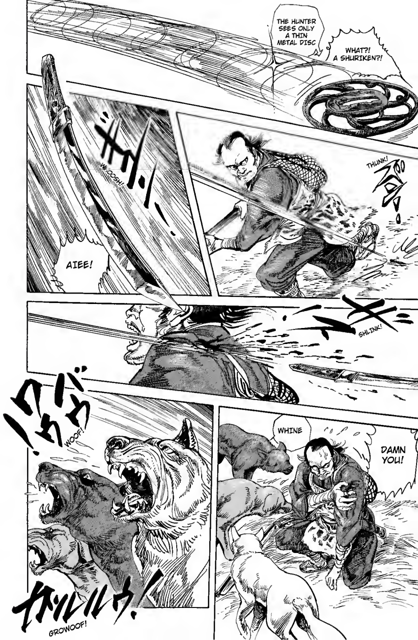

SHHHH SHHHH
ドドドドッ
BUT THE DOGS WERE WAITING IN AMBUSH AT IN INLET WITH THEIR BACKS TO THE SEA
AND ANOTHER GROUP OF DOGS WAS WAITING OPPOSITE THEM!
ONE OF THEM MANAGED TO BITE RENYA'S LEG!
RENYA SCRAMBLED UP A TALL TREE NEARBY
ヴァン
WOOF!
ガルルッ
GRR!

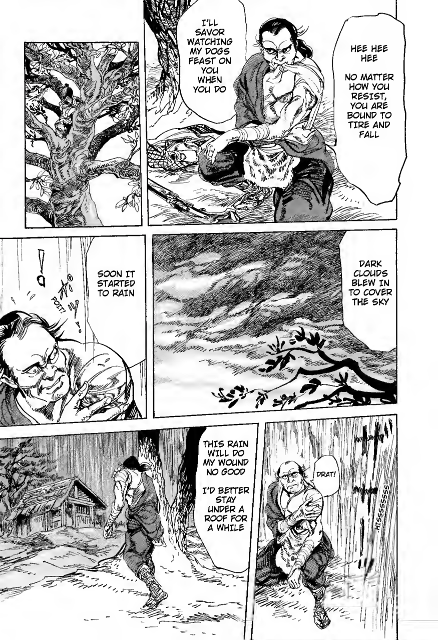

ワン ワン
WOOF!
WOOF!
ガルルーッ
GRRR
HE COULDN'T STAY UP THERE FOREVER
AWARE OF THEIR ADVANTAGE, THE DOGS WAITED
!?


I HAVE DOGS AND A MUSKET
THIS PLACE WILL BE YOUR GRAVE
HA HA HA
SO YOU'RE THE MASTER OF THE DOGS THAT HAVE BEEN CHASING ME!
I AM AN IGA NINJA
I LIVE HERE ON TAJIMA YAGYU'S ORDERS, DISGUISED AS A HUNTER
EVEN IF HUNTING IS ONLY A PART OF YOUR DISGUISE ...
I AM SURE YOU KNOW THE VALUE OF DOGS QUITE WELL
MY DOGS ARE MORE VALUABLE THAN JEWELS
THEY ARE MY BELOVED PARTNERS
DOGS CHERISH THE TRUST OF HUMANS


ORDERING DOGS TO KILL HUMANS IS PURE TREACHERY!
AN IGA NINJA WOULD KILL HIS OWN PARENTS TO FULFILL A MISSION
HEH HEH
DO YOU REALLY THINK ...
YOU CAN HIT ME ...
WHIP!
FROM THAT RANGE?
POP!
MEKUGI
YOU CAN'T HIDE UP THERE
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS GET CLOSER
BUT IF YOU GET CLOSER ...
HEH HEH
DON'T TRY TO FOOL ME
I KNOW THAT YOU AREN'T CARRYING A SHURIKEN
THE ONLY THING YOU CAN THROW IS YOUR SWORD

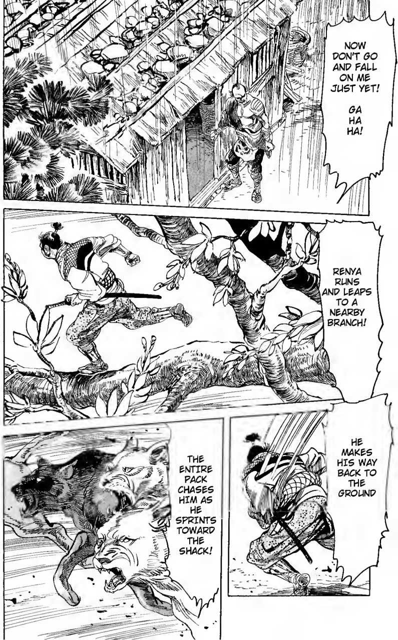

BOOM!
CRACK!
HEH HEH HEH
YOU CAN'T COME DOWN
SHOT
I CAN TAKE MY TIME WITH YOU
WHOOOOSH!
HMPH!
!

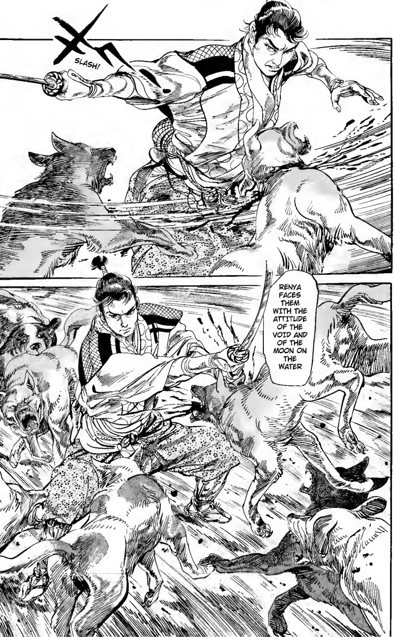

THE HUNTER SEES ONLY A THIN METAL DISC
WHAT?! A SHURIKEN?!
THUNK!
WHOOSH!
AIEE!
SHLINK!
DAMN YOU!
WHINE
WOOF!
GROWOOF!

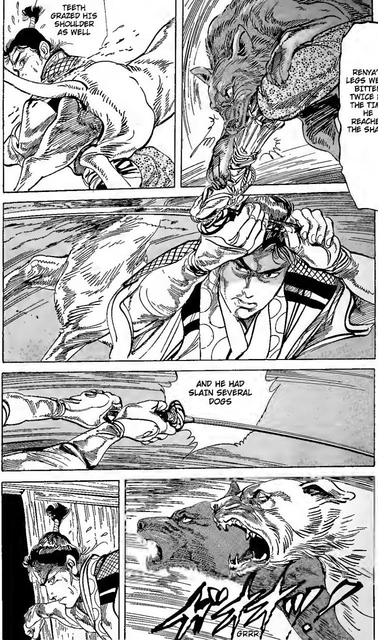

HEE HEE HEE

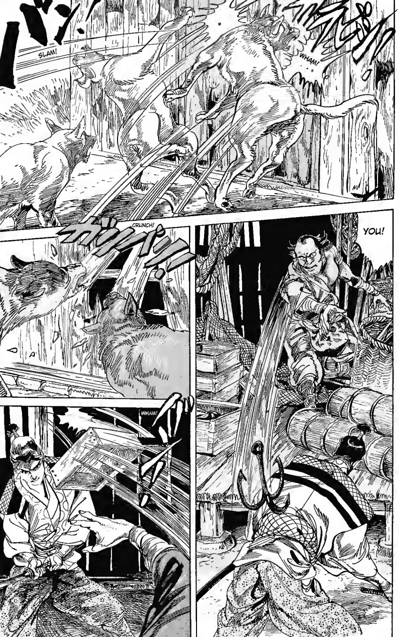
NO MATTER HOW YOU RESIST, YOU ARE BOUND TO TIRE AND FALL
I'LL SAVOR WATCHING MY DOGS FEAST ON YOU WHEN YOU DO
DARK CLOUDS BLEW IN TO COVER THE SKY
SOON IT STARTED TO RAIN
POTI!
DRAT!
HISSSSSSS
THIS RAIN WILL DO MY WOUND NO GOOD

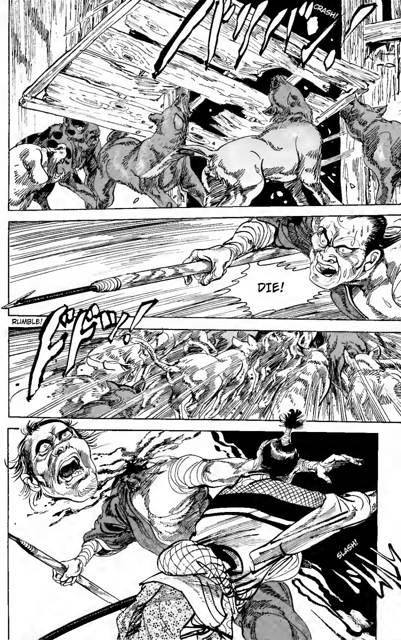
I'D BETTER STAY UNDER A ROOF FOR A WHILE

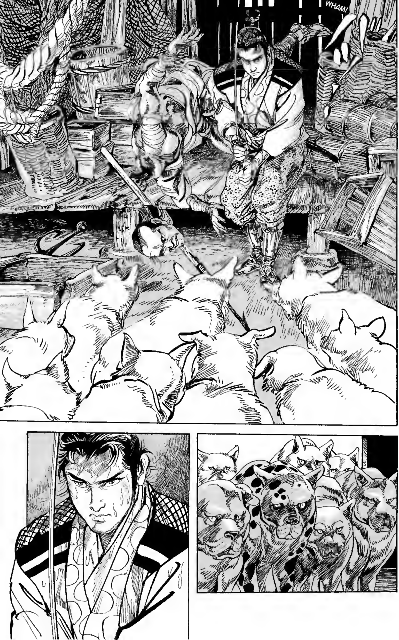

NOW DON'T GO AND FALL ON ME JUST YET!
GA HA HA!
RENYA RUNS AND LEAPS TO A NEARBY BRANCH!
HE MAKES HIS WAY BACK TO THE GROUND
THE ENTIRE PACK CHASES HIM AS HE SPRINTS TOWARD THE SHACK!

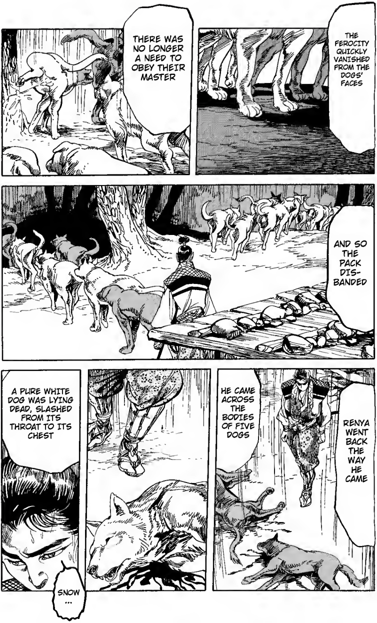

SLASH!
RENYA FACES THEM WITH THE ATTITUDE OF THE VOID AND OF THE MOON ON THE WATER

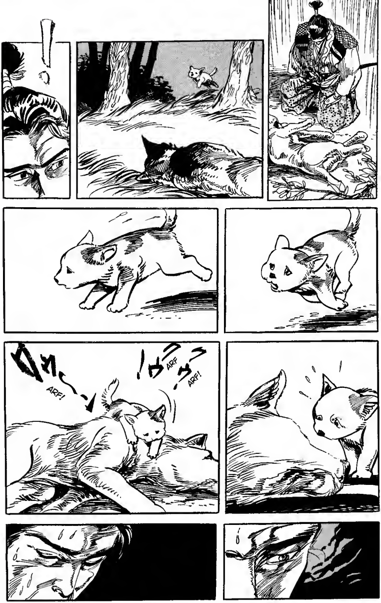

RENYA'S LEGS WERE BITTEN TWICE BY THE TIME HE REACHED THE SHACK
TEETH GRAZED HIS SHOULDER AS WELL
AND HE HAD SLAIN SEVERAL DOGS
GRRR

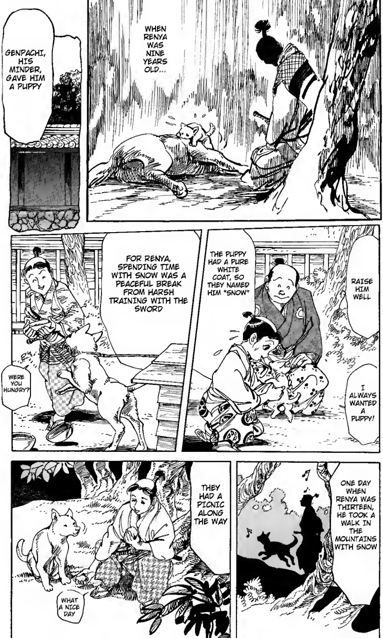

WHAM!
SLAM!
YOU!
CRUNCH!
WHAM!

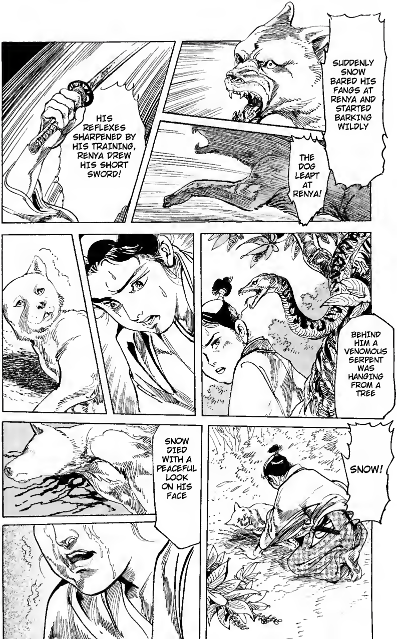

CRASH!
DIE!
RUMBLE!
SLASH!

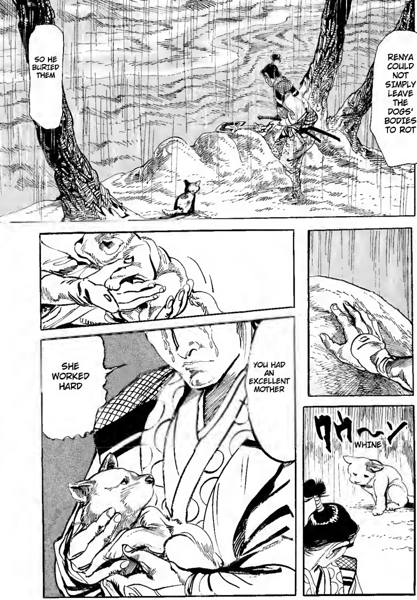

WHAM!

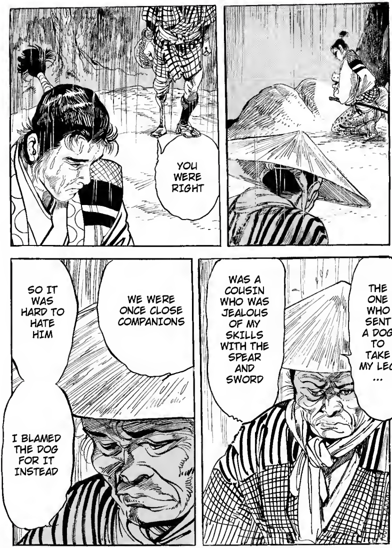

THE FEROCITY QUICKLY VANISHED FROM THE DOGS' FACES
THERE WAS NO LONGER A NEED TO OBEY THEIR MASTER
AND SO THE PACK DISBANDED
RENYA WENT BACK THE WAY HE CAME
HE CAME ACROSS THE BODIES OF FIVE DOGS
A PURE WHITE DOG WAS LYING DEAD, SLASHED FROM ITS THROAT TO ITS CHEST
SNOW ...

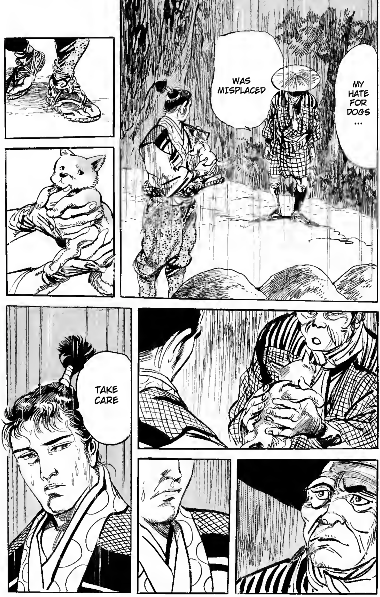

!
!
ARF
ARF!
ARF!

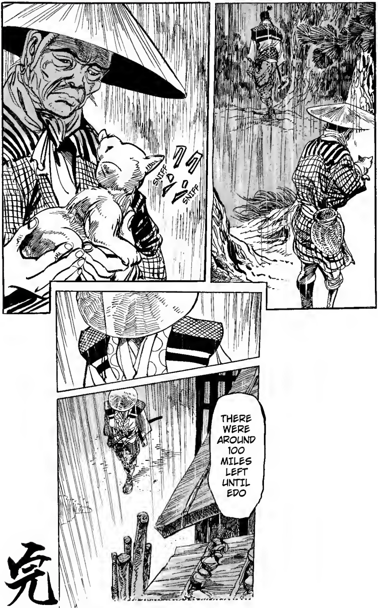

WHEN RENYA WAS NINE YEARS OLD...
GENPACHI, HIS MINDER, GAVE HIM A PUPPY
RAISE HIM WELL
I ALWAYS WANTED A PUPPY!
THE PUPPY HAD A PURE WHITE COAT, SO THEY NAMED HIM "SNOW"
FOR RENYA, SPENDING TIME WITH SNOW WAS A PEACEFUL BREAK FROM HARSH TRAINING WITH THE SWORD
WERE YOU HUNGRY?
ONE DAY WHEN RENYA WAS THIRTEEN, HE TOOK A WALK IN THE MOUNTAINS WITH SNOW
THEY HAD A PICNIC ALONG THE WAY
WHAT A NICE DAY


SUDDENLY SNOW BARED HIS FANGS AT RENYA AND STARTED BARKING WILDLY
THE DOG LEAPT AT RENYA!
HIS REFLEXES SHARPENED BY HIS TRAINING, RENYA DREW HIS SHORT SWORD!
BEHIND HIM A VENOMOUS SERPENT WAS HANGING FROM A TREE
SNOW!
SNOW DIED WITH A PEACEFUL LOOK ON HIS FACE


RENYA COULD NOT SIMPLY LEAVE THE DOGS' BODIES TO ROT
SO HE BURIED THEM
YOU HAD AN EXCELLENT MOTHER
SHE WORKED HARD
クウ～ン
WHINE


YOU WERE RIGHT
THE ONE WHO SENT A DOG TO TAKE MY LEG ...
WAS A COUSIN WHO WAS JEALOUS OF MY SKILLS WITH THE SPEAR AND SWORD
WE WERE ONCE CLOSE COMPANIONS
SO IT WAS HARD TO HATE HIM
I BLAMED THE DOG FOR IT INSTEAD

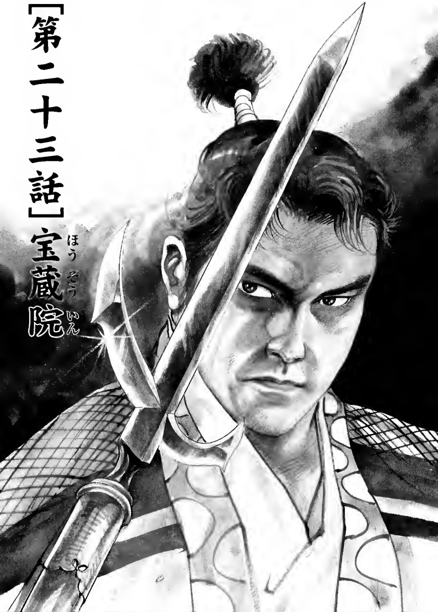

MY HATE FOR DOGS ...
WAS MISPLACED
TAKE CARE

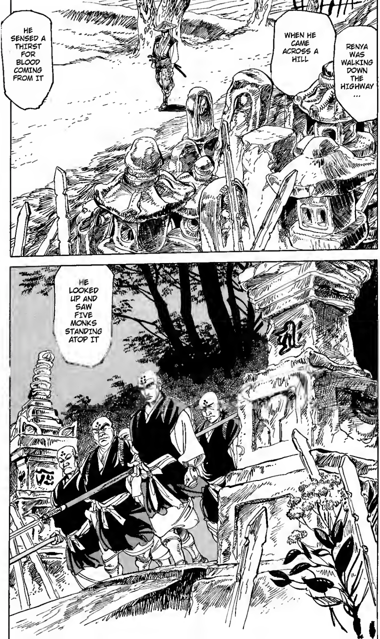


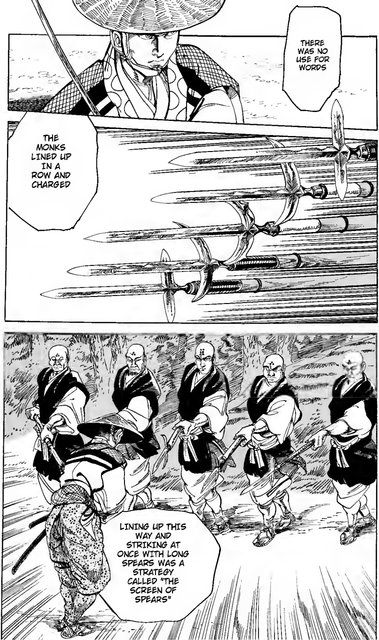
SNIFF
SNIFF
THERE WERE AROUND 100 MILES LEFT UNTIL EDO
完

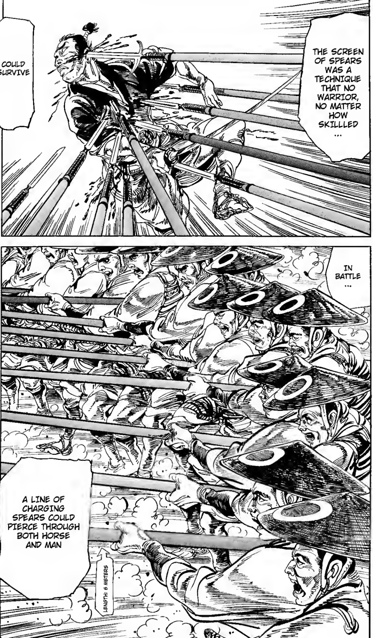
● CHAPTER 22 - FIN ●

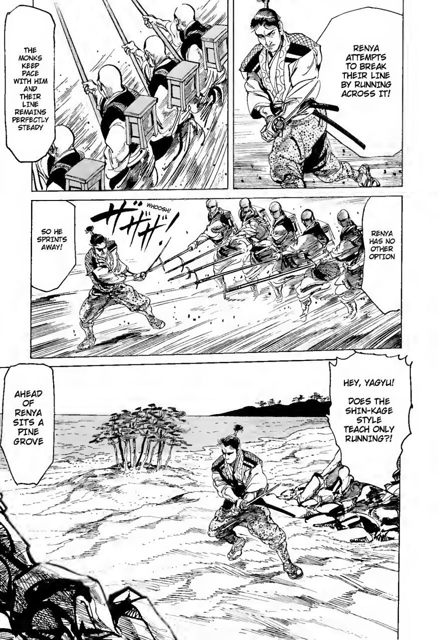
CHAPTER 23: HOZOIN

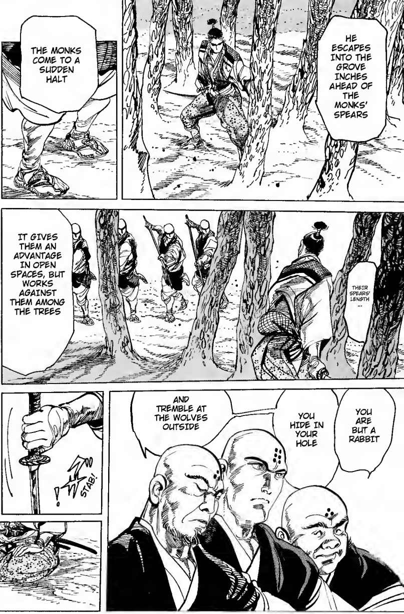

「第二十三話」
宝蔵院（ほうぞういん）

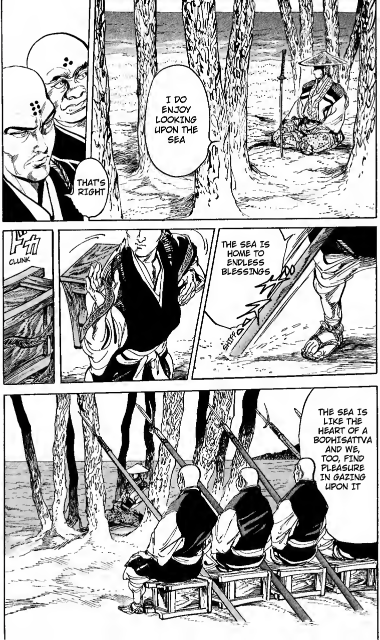

RENYA WAS WALKING DOWN THE HIGHWAY ...
WHEN HE CAME ACROSS A HILL
HE SENSED A THIRST FOR BLOOD COMING FROM IT
HE LOOKED UP AND SAW FIVE MONKS STANDING ATOP IT

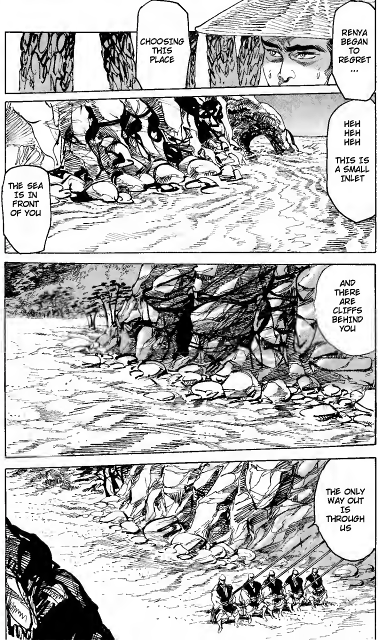

THERE WAS NO USE FOR WORDS
THE MONKS LINED UP IN A ROW AND CHARGED
LINING UP THIS WAY AND STRIKING AT ONCE WITH LONG SPEARS WAS A STRATEGY CALLED "THE SCREEN OF SPEARS"

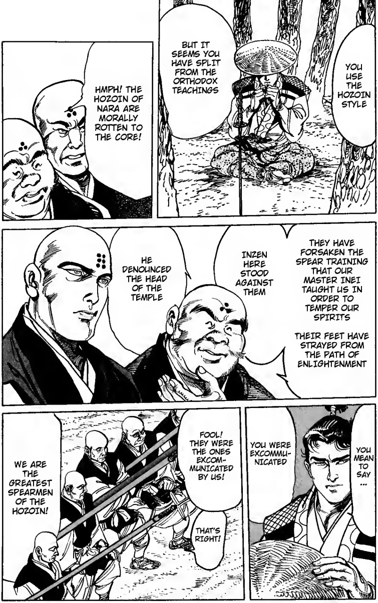

THE SCREEN OF SPEARS WAS A TECHNIQUE THAT NO WARRIOR, NO MATTER HOW SKILLED ...
COULD SURVIVE
IN BATTLE ...
A LINE OF CHARGING SPEARS COULD PIERCE THROUGH BOTH HORSE AND MAN
LENGTH: 6 METERS

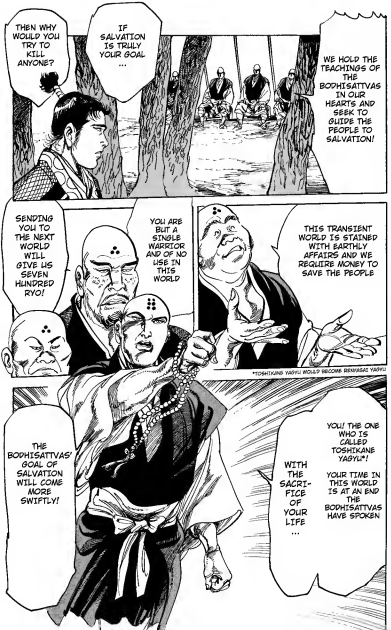

RENYA ATTEMPTS TO BREAK THEIR LINE BY RUNNING ACROSS IT!
THE MONKS KEEP PACE WITH HIM AND THEIR LINE REMAINS PERFECTLY STEADY
RENYA HAS NO OTHER OPTION
ザザザ
WHOOSH!
SO HE SPRINTS AWAY!
HEY, YAGYU!
DOES THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE TEACH ONLY RUNNING?!
AHEAD OF RENYA SITS A PINE GROVE


HE ESCAPES INTO THE GROVE INCHES AHEAD OF THE MONKS' SPEARS
THE MONKS COME TO A SUDDEN HALT
THEIR SPEARS' LENGTH ...
IT GIVES THEM AN ADVANTAGE IN OPEN SPACES, BUT WORKS AGAINST THEM AMONG THE TREES
YOU ARE BUT A RABBIT
YOU HIDE IN YOUR HOLE
AND TREMBLE AT THE WOLVES OUTSIDE
STAB!

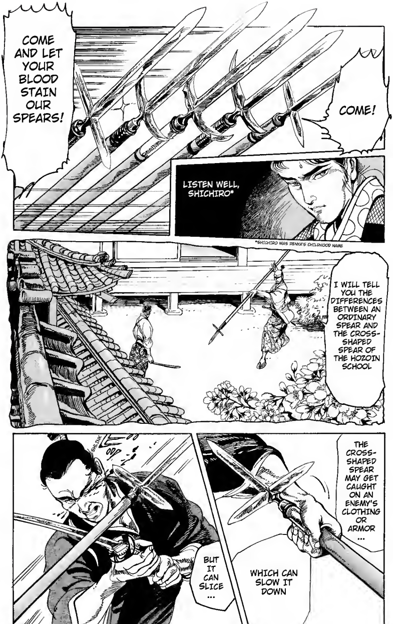

I DO ENJOY LOOKING UPON THE SEA
THAT'S RIGHT
THE SEA IS HOME TO ENDLESS BLESSINGS
SHIFF
ドカ
CLUNK
THE SEA IS LIKE THE HEART OF A BODHISATTVA AND WE, TOO, FIND PLEASURE IN GAZING UPON IT


RENYA BEGAN TO REGRET ...
CHOOSING THIS PLACE
HEH HEH HEH THIS IS A SMALL INLET
THE SEA IS IN FRONT OF YOU
AND THERE ARE CLIFFS BEHIND YOU
THE ONLY WAY OUT IS THROUGH US

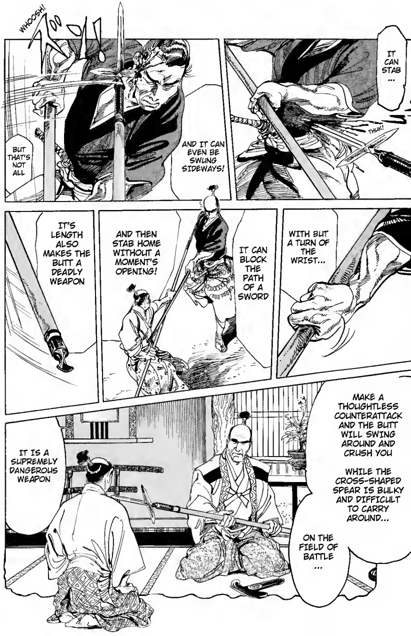

YOU USE THE HOZOIN STYLE
BUT IT SEEMS YOU HAVE SPLIT FROM THE ORTHODOX TEACHINGS
HMPH! THE HOZOIN OF NARA ARE MORALLY ROTTEN TO THE CORE!
THEY HAVE FORSAKEN THE SPEAR TRAINING THAT OUR MASTER INEI TAUGHT US IN ORDER TO TEMPER OUR SPIRITS
THEIR FEET HAVE STRAYED FROM THE PATH OF ENLIGHTENMENT
INZEN HERE STOOD AGAINST THEM
HE DENOUNCED THE HEAD OF THE TEMPLE
YOU MEAN TO SAY ...
YOU WERE EXCOMMUNICATED
FOOL! THEY WERE THE ONES EXCOMMUNICATED BY US!
THAT'S RIGHT!
WE ARE THE GREATEST SPEARMEN OF THE HOZOIN!

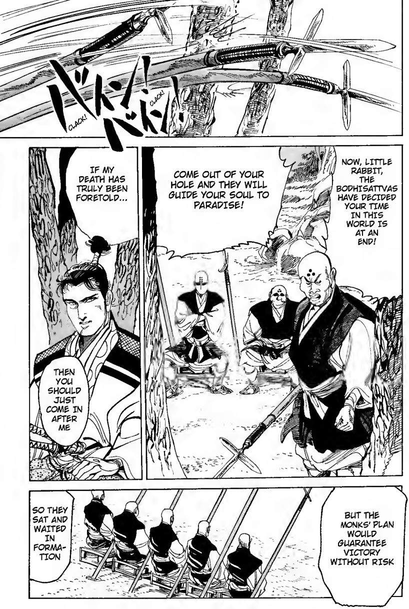

WE HOLD THE TEACHINGS OF THE BODHISATTVAS IN OUR HEARTS AND SEEK TO GUIDE THE PEOPLE TO SALVATION!
IF SALVATION IS TRULY YOUR GOAL ...
THEN WHY WOULD YOU TRY TO KILL ANYONE?
THIS TRANSIENT WORLD IS STAINED WITH EARTHLY AFFAIRS AND WE REQUIRE MONEY TO SAVE THE PEOPLE
YOU ARE BUT A SINGLE WARRIOR AND OF NO USE IN THIS WORLD
SENDING YOU TO THE NEXT WORLD WILL GIVE US SEVEN HUNDRED RYO!
YOU! THE ONE WHO IS CALLED TOSHIKANE YAGYU*!
YOUR TIME IN THIS WORLD IS AT AN END THE BODHISATTVAS HAVE SPOKEN
WITH THE SACRIFICE OF YOUR LIFE ...
THE BODHISATTVAS' GOAL OF SALVATION WILL COME MORE SWIFTLY!

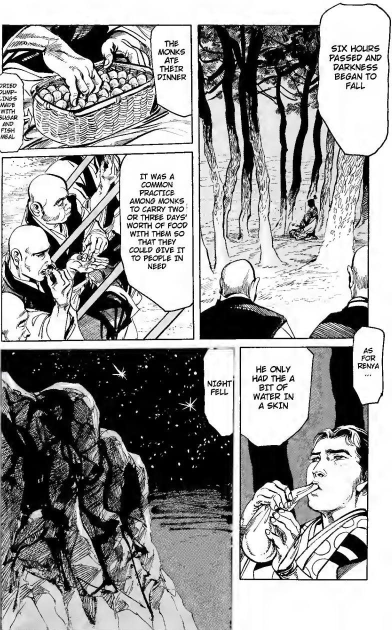
*TOSHIKANE YAGYU WOULD BECOME RENYASAI YAGYU

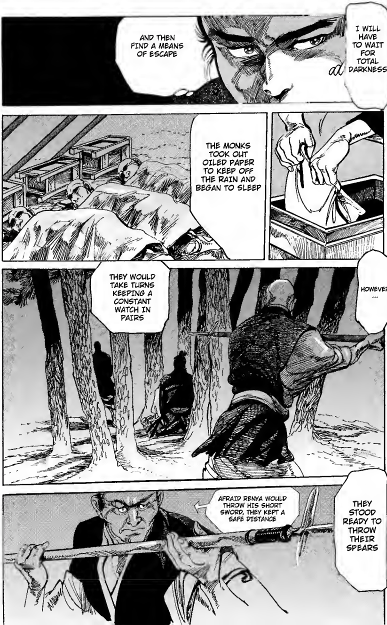

COME!
COME AND LET YOUR BLOOD STAIN OUR SPEARS!
LISTEN WELL, SHICHIRO*
I WILL TELL YOU THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AN ORDINARY SPEAR AND THE CROSS-SHAPED SPEAR OF THE HOZOIN SCHOOL
THE CROSS-SHAPED SPEAR MAY GET CAUGHT ON AN ENEMY'S CLOTHING OR ARMOR ...
WHICH CAN SLOW IT DOWN
SHLINK
BUT IT CAN SLICE ...

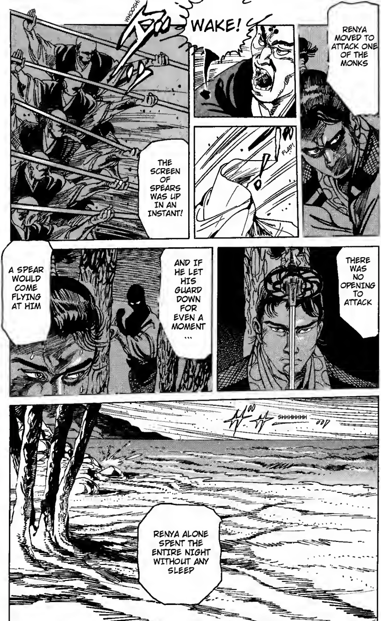
*SHICHIRO WAS RENYA'S CHILDHOOD NAME

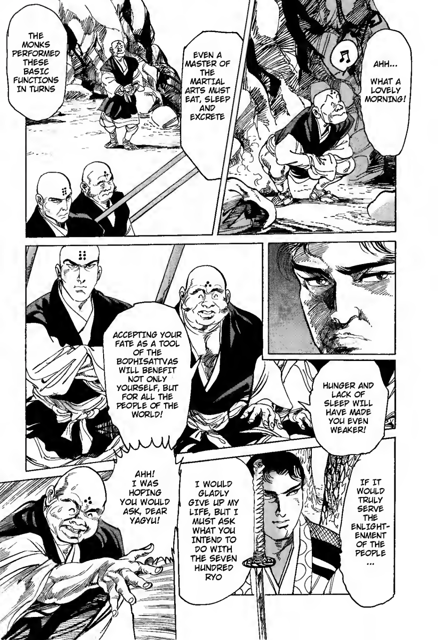

IT CAN STAB ...
THUK!
WHOOSH!
BUT THAT'S NOT ALL
AND IT CAN EVEN BE SWUNG SIDEWAYS!
WITH BUT A TURN OF THE WRIST...
IT CAN BLOCK THE PATH OF A SWORD
AND THEN STAB HOME WITHOUT A MOMENT'S OPENING!
IT'S LENGTH ALSO MAKES THE BUTT A DEADLY WEAPON
MAKE A THOUGHTLESS COUNTERATTACK AND THE BUTT WILL SWING AROUND AND CRUSH YOU
WHILE THE CROSS-SHAPED SPEAR IS BULKY AND DIFFICULT TO CARRY AROUND...
ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE ...
IT IS A SUPREMELY DANGEROUS WEAPON

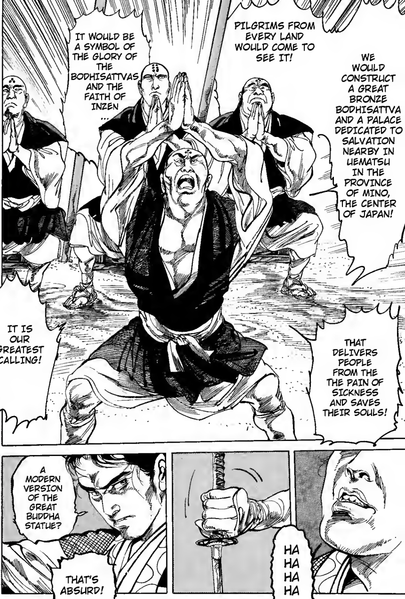

バン！
CLACK!
バン！
CLACK!
NOW, LITTLE RABBIT, THE BODHISATTVAS HAVE DECIDED YOUR TIME IN THIS WORLD IS AT AN END!
COME OUT OF YOUR HOLE AND THEY WILL GUIDE YOUR SOUL TO PARADISE!
IF MY DEATH HAS TRULY BEEN FORETOLD...
THEN YOU SHOULD JUST COME IN AFTER ME
SO THEY SAT AND WAITED IN FORMATION
BUT THE MONKS' PLAN WOULD GUARANTEE VICTORY WITHOUT RISK

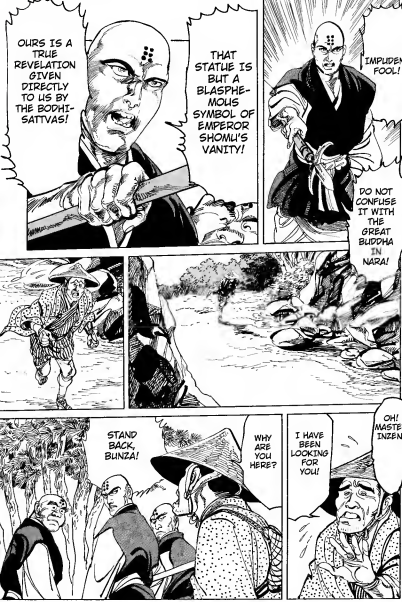

THE MONKS ATE THEIR DINNER
DRIED DUMPLINGS MADE WITH SUGAR AND FISH MEAL
IT WAS A COMMON PRACTICE AMONG MONKS TO CARRY TWO OR THREE DAYS' WORTH OF FOOD WITH THEM SO THAT THEY COULD GIVE IT TO PEOPLE IN NEED
SIX HOURS PASSED AND DARKNESS BEGAN TO FALL
NIGHT FELL
AS FOR RENYA ...
HE ONLY HAD THE A BIT OF WATER IN A SKIN

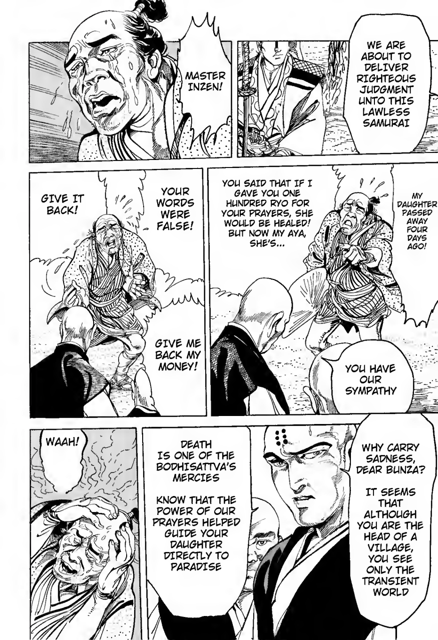

I WILL HAVE TO WAIT FOR TOTAL DARKNESS
AND THEN FIND A MEANS OF ESCAPE
THE MONKS TOOK OUT OILED PAPER TO KEEP OFF THE RAIN AND BEGAN TO SLEEP
HOWEVER ...
THEY WOULD TAKE TURNS KEEPING A CONSTANT WATCH IN PAIRS
THEY STOOD READY TO THROW THEIR SPEARS
AFRAID RENYA WOULD THROW HIS SHORT SWORD, THEY KEPT A SAFE DISTANCE

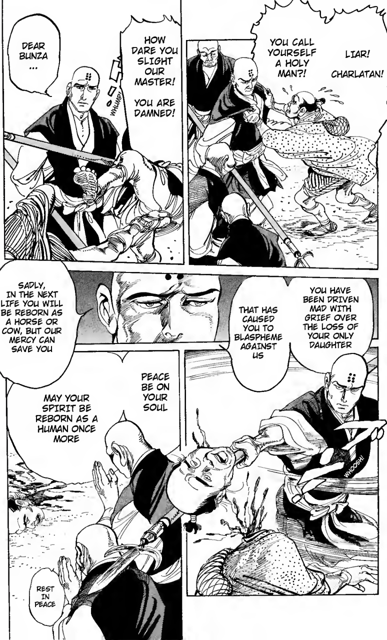

RENYA MOVED TO ATTACK ONE OF THE MONKS
WAKE!
FLAP!
WHOOSH!
THE SCREEN OF SPEARS WAS UP IN AN INSTANT!
THERE WAS NO OPENING TO ATTACK
AND IF HE LET HIS GUARD DOWN FOR EVEN A MOMENT ...
A SPEAR WOULD COME FLYING AT HIM
SHHHHHHH
RENYA ALONE SPENT THE ENTIRE NIGHT WITHOUT ANY SLEEP

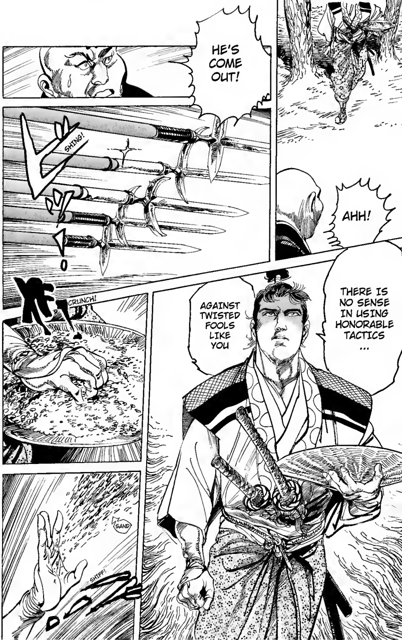

♫
AHH... WHAT A LOVELY MORNING!
EVEN A MASTER OF THE MARTIAL ARTS MUST EAT, SLEEP AND EXCRETE
THE MONKS PERFORMED THESE BASIC FUNCTIONS IN TURNS
HUNGER AND LACK OF SLEEP WILL HAVE MADE YOU EVEN WEAKER!
ACCEPTING YOUR FATE AS A TOOL OF THE BODHISATTVAS WILL BENEFIT NOT ONLY YOURSELF, BUT FOR ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD!
IF IT WOULD TRULY SERVE THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE PEOPLE ...
I WOULD GLADLY GIVE UP MY LIFE, BUT I MUST ASK WHAT YOU INTEND TO DO WITH THE SEVEN HUNDRED RYO
AHH! I WAS HOPING YOU WOULD ASK, DEAR YAGYU!

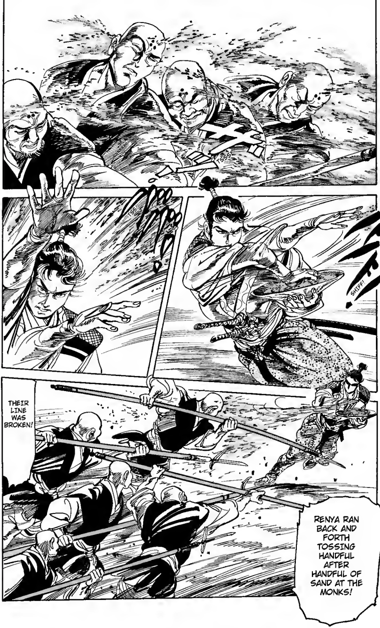

WE WOULD CONSTRUCT A GREAT BRONZE BODHISATTVA AND A PALACE DEDICATED TO SALVATION NEARBY IN UEMATSU IN THE PROVINCE OF MINO, THE CENTER OF JAPAN!
THAT DELIVERS PEOPLE FROM THE THE PAIN OF SICKNESS AND SAVES THEIR SOULS!
IT WOULD BE A SYMBOL OF THE GLORY OF THE BODHISATTVAS AND THE FAITH OF INZEN ...
PILGRIMS FROM EVERY LAND WOULD COME TO SEE IT!
IT IS OUR GREATEST CALLING!
A MODERN VERSION OF THE GREAT BUDDHA STATUE?
THAT'S ABSURD!
HA HA HA HA

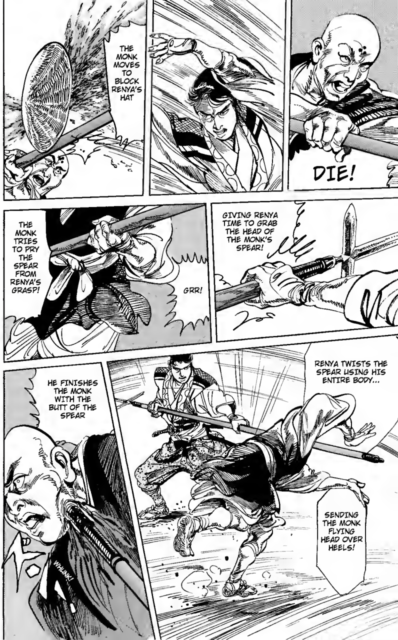

OURS IS A TRUE REVELATION GIVEN DIRECTLY TO US BY THE BODHISATTVAS!
THAT STATUE IS BUT A BLASPHEMOUS SYMBOL OF EMPEROR SHOMU'S VANITY!
IMPUDENT FOOL!
DO NOT CONFUSE IT WITH THE GREAT BUDDHA IN NARA!
STAND BACK, BUNZA!
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
OH! MASTER INZEN!
I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU!

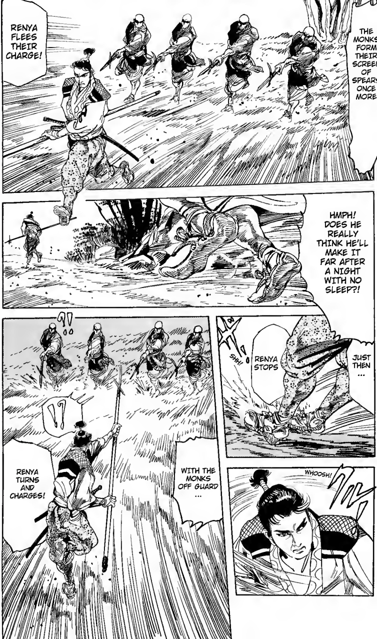

WE ARE ABOUT TO DELIVER RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT UNTO THIS LAWLESS SAMURAI
MASTER INZEN!
MY DAUGHTER PASSED AWAY FOUR DAYS AGO!
YOU SAID THAT IF I GAVE YOU ONE HUNDRED RYO FOR YOUR PRAYERS, SHE WOULD BE HEALED! BUT NOW MY AYA, SHE'S...
YOU HAVE OUR SYMPATHY
YOUR WORDS WERE FALSE!
GIVE IT BACK!
GIVE ME BACK MY MONEY!
WHY CARRY SADNESS, DEAR BUNZA?
IT SEEMS THAT ALTHOUGH YOU ARE THE HEAD OF A VILLAGE, YOU SEE ONLY THE TRANSIENT WORLD
DEATH IS ONE OF THE BODHISATTVA'S MERCIES
KNOW THAT THE POWER OF OUR PRAYERS HELPED GUIDE YOUR DAUGHTER DIRECTLY TO PARADISE
WAAH!

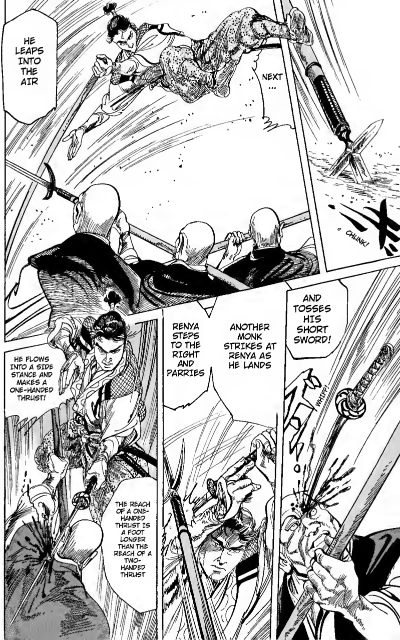

YOU CALL YOURSELF A HOLY MAN?!
LIAR!
CHARLATAN!
HOW DARE YOU SLIGHT OUR MASTER!
YOU ARE DAMNED!
WHUMP!
DEAR BUNZA ...
YOU HAVE BEEN DRIVEN MAD WITH GRIEF OVER THE LOSS OF YOUR ONLY DAUGHTER
THAT HAS CAUSED YOU TO BLASPHEME AGAINST US
SADLY, IN THE NEXT LIFE YOU WILL BE REBORN AS A HORSE OR COW, BUT OUR MERCY CAN SAVE YOU
WHOOSH!
PEACE BE ON YOUR SOUL
MAY YOUR SPIRIT BE REBORN AS A HUMAN ONCE MORE
REST IN PEACE

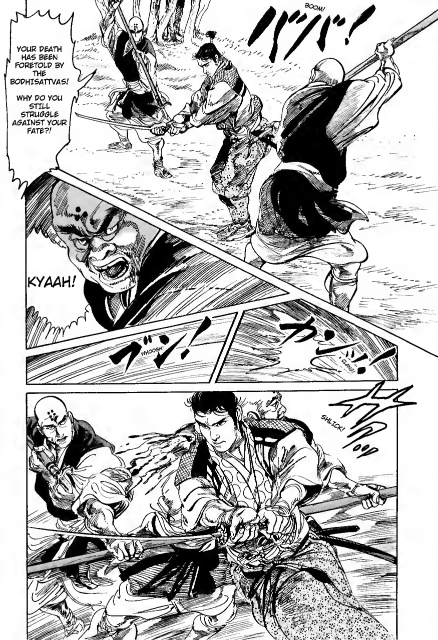

HE'S COME OUT!
AHH!
SHING!
THERE IS NO SENSE IN USING HONORABLE TACTICS ...
AGAINST TWISTED FOOLS LIKE YOU
CRUNCH!
SAND
SHIFF!

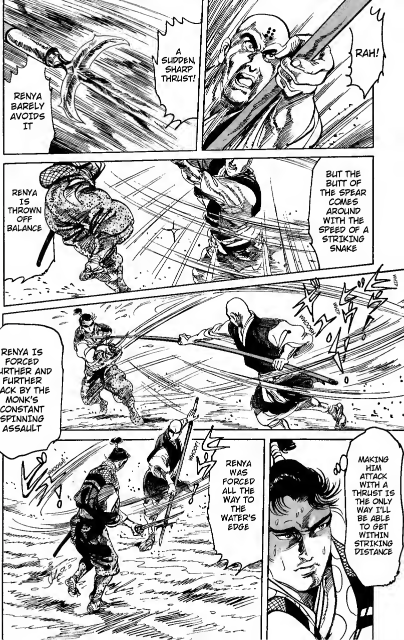

SHIFF!
SHIFF!
THEIR LINE WAS BROKEN!
RENYA RAN BACK AND FORTH TOSSING HANDFUL AFTER HANDFUL OF SAND AT THE MONKS!

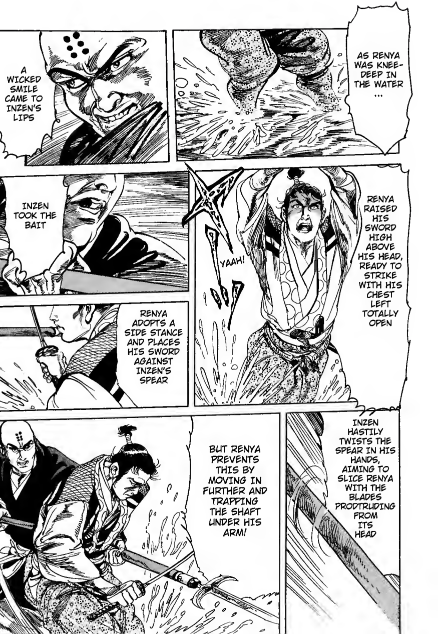

THE MONK MOVES TO BLOCK RENYA'S HAT
DIE!
THE MONK TRIES TO PRY THE SPEAR FROM RENYA'S GRASP!
GRR!
GIVING RENYA TIME TO GRAB THE HEAD OF THE MONK'S SPEAR!
RENYA TWISTS THE SPEAR USING HIS ENTIRE BODY...
SENDING THE MONK FLYING HEAD OVER HEELS!
HE FINISHES THE MONK WITH THE BUTT OF THE SPEAR
WHUNK!

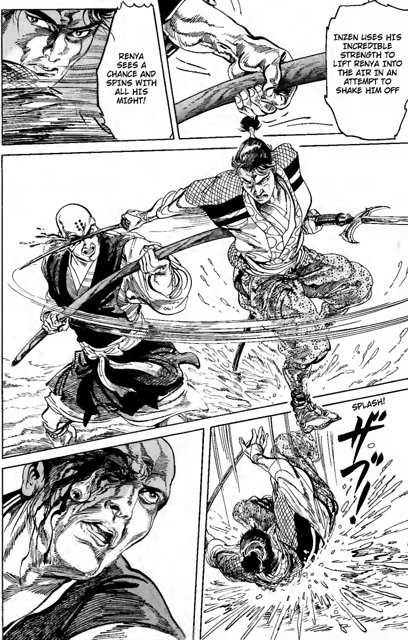

THE MONKS FORM THEIR SCREEN OF SPEARS ONCE MORE
RENYA FLEES THEIR CHARGE!
HMPH! DOES HE REALLY THINK HE'LL MAKE IT FAR AFTER A NIGHT WITH NO SLEEP?!
JUST THEN ...
RENYA STOPS
SHH!!
WHOOSH!
!?
!?
WITH THE MONKS OFF GUARD ...
RENYA TURNS AND CHARGES!

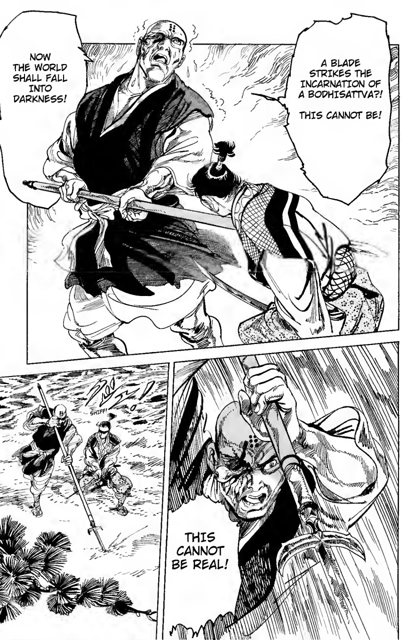

HE LEAPS INTO THE AIR
NEXT ...
CHUNK!
ANOTHER MONK STRIKES AT RENYA AS HE LANDS
RENYA STEPS TO THE RIGHT AND PARRIES
AND TOSSES HIS SHORT SWORD!
WHIFF!
HE FLOWS INTO A SIDE STANCE AND MAKES A ONE-HANDED THRUST!
THE REACH OF A ONE-HANDED THRUST IS A FOOT LONGER THAN THE REACH OF A TWO-HANDED THRUST

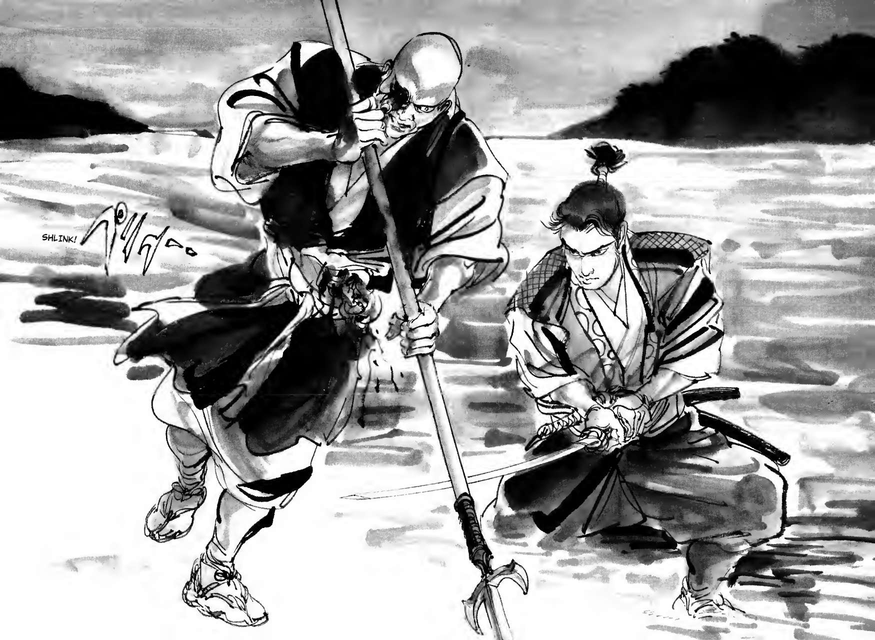

BOOM!
YOUR DEATH HAS BEEN FORETOLD BY THE BODHISATTVAS!
WHY DO YOU STILL STRUGGLE AGAINST YOUR FATE?!
KYAAH!
カン!!
CLANG!
ブン!
WHOOSH!
SHLICK!

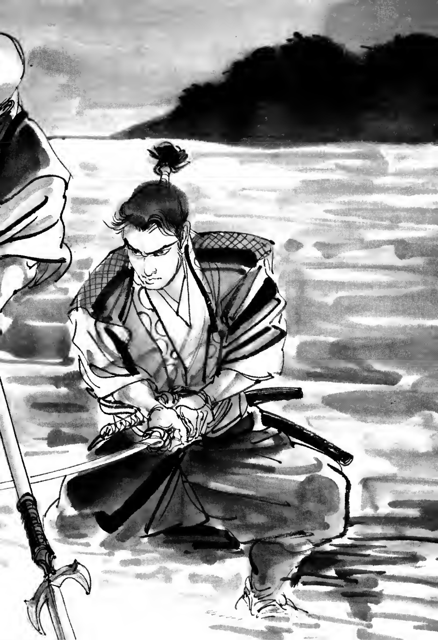

RAH!
A SUDDEN, SHARP THRUST!
RENYA BARELY AVOIDS IT
BUT THE BUTT OF THE SPEAR COMES AROUND WITH THE SPEED OF A STRIKING SNAKE
RENYA IS THROWN OFF BALANCE
WHIP
WHIP
WHOOSH
RENYA IS FORCED FURTHER AND FURTHER BACK BY THE MONK'S CONSTANT SPINNING ASSAULT
MAKING HIM ATTACK WITH A THRUST IS THE ONLY WAY I'LL BE ABLE TO GET WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE
RENYA WAS FORCED ALL THE WAY TO THE WATER'S EDGE
WHOOF!
WHOOSH!

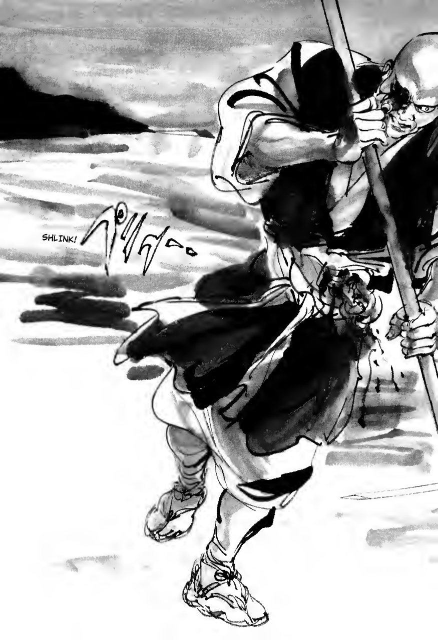

AS RENYA WAS KNEE-DEEP IN THE WATER ...
A WICKED SMILE CAME TO INZEN'S LIPS
RENYA RAISED HIS SWORD HIGH ABOVE HIS HEAD, READY TO STRIKE WITH HIS CHEST LEFT TOTALLY OPEN
YAAH!
INZEN TOOK THE BAIT
RENYA ADOPTS A SIDE STANCE AND PLACES HIS SWORD AGAINST INZEN'S SPEAR
INZEN HASTILY TWISTS THE SPEAR IN HIS HANDS, AIMING TO SLICE RENYA WITH THE BLADES PRODTRUDING FROM ITS HEAD
BUT RENYA PREVENTS THIS BY MOVING IN FURTHER AND TRAPPING THE SHAFT UNDER HIS ARM!

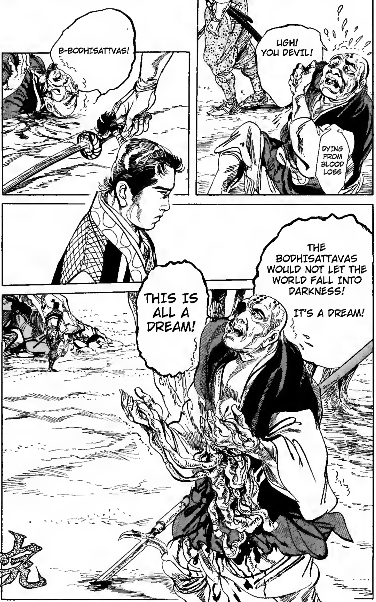

INZEN USES HIS INCREDIBLE STRENGTH TO LIFT RENYA INTO THE AIR IN AN ATTEMPT TO SHAKE HIM OFF
RENYA SEES A CHANCE AND SPINS WITH ALL HIS MIGHT!
SPLASH!
ザブッ!


A BLADE STRIKES THE INCARNATION OF A BODHISATTVA?!
THIS CANNOT BE!
NOW THE WORLD SHALL FALL INTO DARKNESS!
THIS CANNOT BE REAL!
SHIPP!


ペリッ
SHLINK!



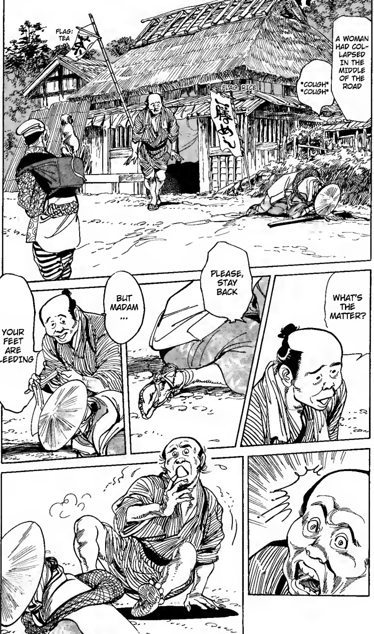

SHLINK!

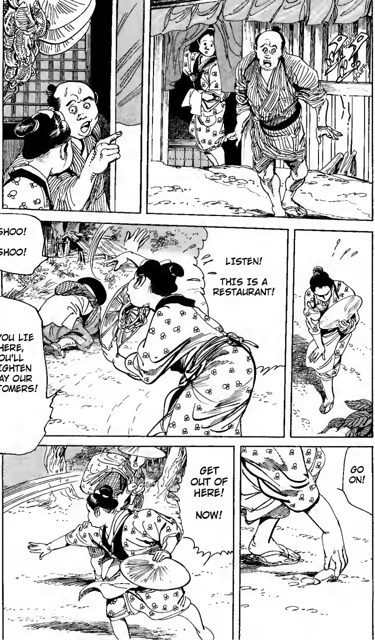

UGH! YOU DEVIL!
DYING FROM BLOOD LOSS
B-BODHISATTVAS!
THE BODHISATTVAS WOULD NOT LET THE WORLD FALL INTO DARKNESS!
IT'S A DREAM!
THIS IS ALL A DREAM!
完

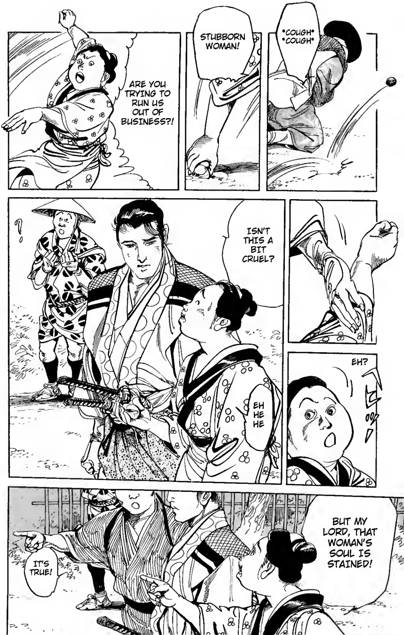
● CHAPTER 23 - FIN ●

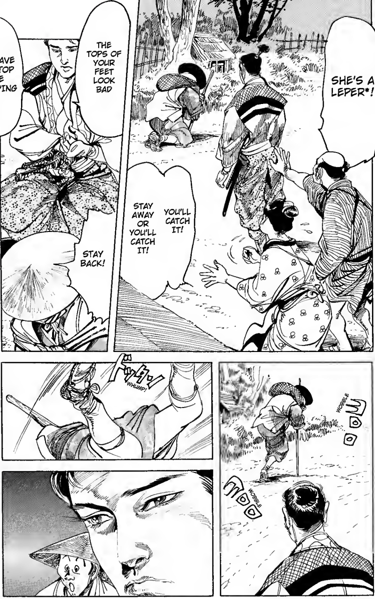
CHAPTER 24: OKO

「第二十四話」お幸（こう）

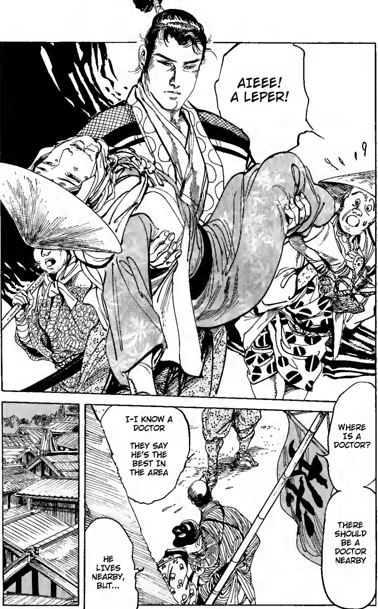

A WOMAN HAD COLLAPSED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD
COUGH *COUGH*
FLAG: RICE
FLAG: TEA
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
PLEASE, STAY BACK
BUT MADAM ...
YOUR FEET ARE BLEEDING

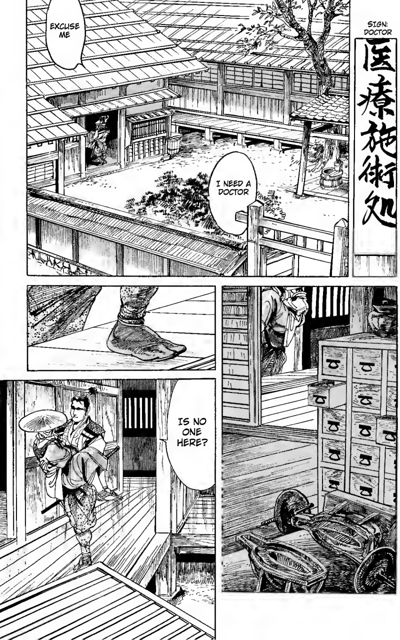

SCUFF
SCUFF
SHOO!
SHOO!
LISTEN!
THIS IS A RESTAURANT!
IF YOU LIE THERE, YOU'LL FRIGHTEN AWAY OUR CUSTOMERS!
GET OUT OF HERE!
NOW!
GO ON!


ARE YOU TRYING TO RUN US OUT OF BUSINESS?!
STUBBORN WOMAN!
COUGH *COUGH*
?
ISN'T THIS A BIT CRUEL?
EH HE HE
EH?
BUT MY LORD, THAT WOMAN'S SOUL IS STAINED!
IT'S TRUE!

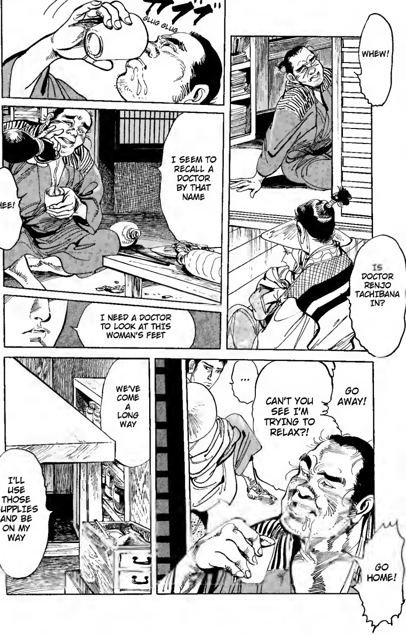

SHE'S A LEPER*!
YOU'LL CATCH IT!
STAY AWAY OR YOU'LL CATCH IT!
THE TOPS OF YOUR FEET LOOK BAD
WE HAVE TO STOP THE BLEEDING
STAY BACK!
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
WHUMP!

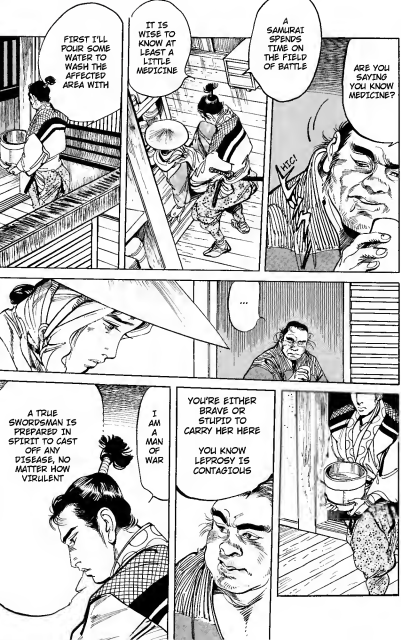
*THE ANCIENT JAPANESE VIEW OF LEPROSY CAME FROM THE HINDU CIRCLE OF TRANSMIGRATION, WHERE IT WAS THOUGHT TO BE CAUSED BY KARMA FROM A PREVIOUS LIFE. THIS WAY OF THINKING WAS THE SOURCE OF MUCH DISCRIMINATION THROUGHOUT JAPAN'S HISTORY." -SHINZO TOMI

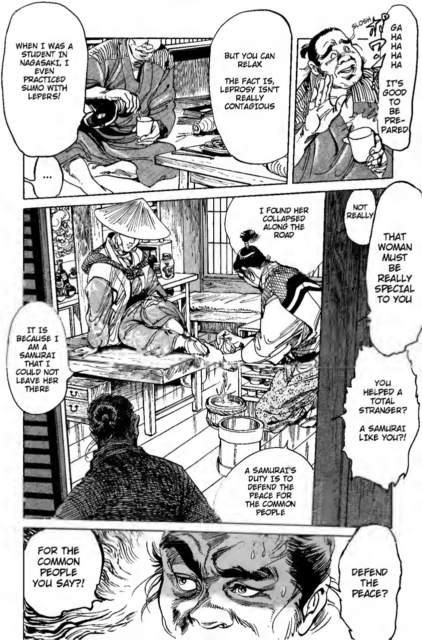

AIEEE! A LEPER!
WHERE IS A DOCTOR?
THERE SHOULD BE A DOCTOR NEARBY
I-I KNOW A DOCTOR THEY SAY HE'S THE BEST IN THE AREA
HE LIVES NEARBY, BUT...

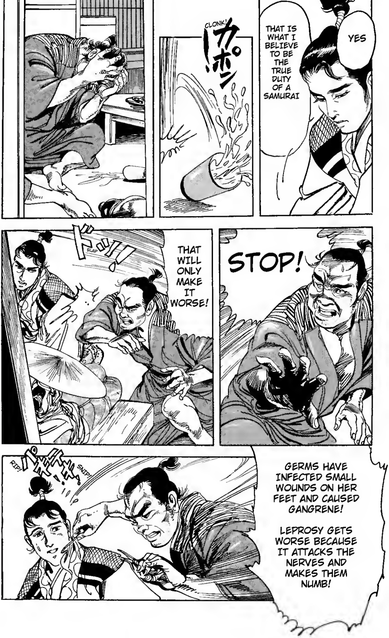


SIGN: DOCTOR
医療施術処
EXCUSE ME
I NEED A DOCTOR
IS NO ONE HERE?

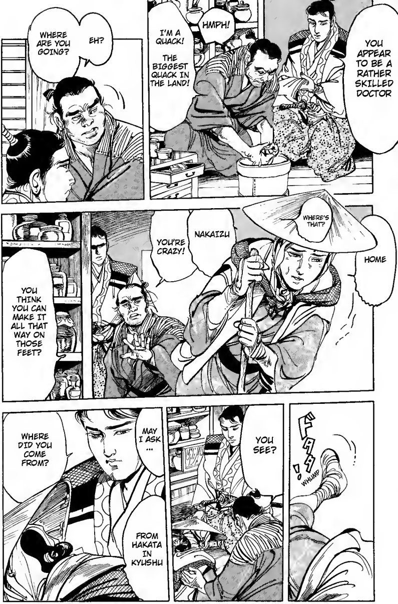

GLUG GLUG
WHEW!
IS DOCTOR RENJO TACHIBANA IN?
I SEEM TO RECALL A DOCTOR BY THAT NAME
HEE!
I NEED A DOCTOR TO LOOK AT THIS WOMAN'S FEET
...
GO AWAY!
CAN'T YOU SEE I'M TRYING TO RELAX?!
GO HOME!
WE'VE COME A LONG WAY
I'LL USE THOSE SUPPLIES AND BE ON MY WAY

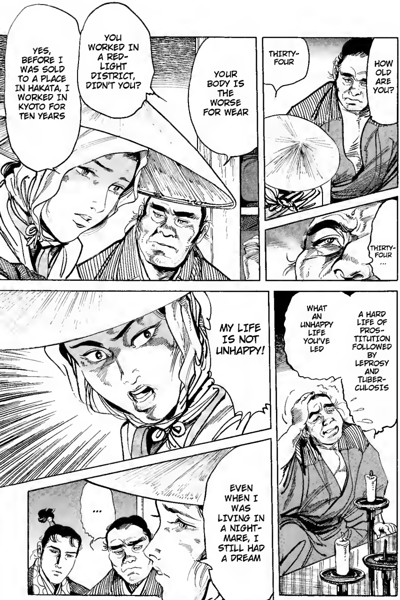

ARE YOU SAYING YOU KNOW MEDICINE?
HIC!
A SAMURAI SPENDS TIME ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE
IT IS WISE TO KNOW AT LEAST A LITTLE MEDICINE
FIRST I'LL POUR SOME WATER TO WASH THE AFFECTED AREA WITH
...
YOU'RE EITHER BRAVE OR STUPID TO CARRY HER HERE
YOU KNOW LEPROSY IS CONTAGIOUS
I AM A MAN OF WAR
A TRUE SWORDSMAN IS PREPARED IN SPIRIT TO CAST OFF ANY DISEASE, NO MATTER HOW VIRULENT

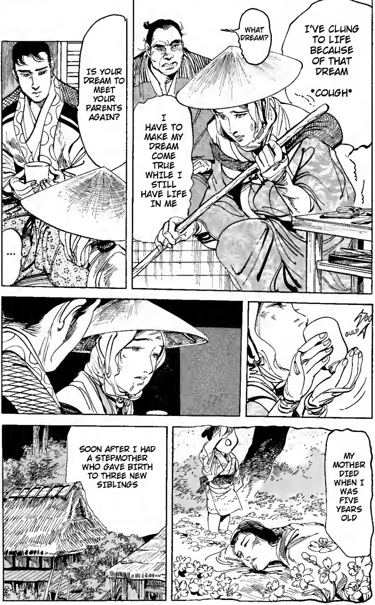

SLOSH
GA HA HA HA HA
IT'S GOOD TO BE PREPARED
BUT YOU CAN RELAX
THE FACT IS, LEPROSY ISN'T REALLY CONTAGIOUS
WHEN I WAS A STUDENT IN NAGASAKI, I EVEN PRACTICED SUMO WITH LEPERS!
...
THAT WOMAN MUST BE REALLY SPECIAL TO YOU
NOT REALLY
I FOUND HER COLLAPSED ALONG THE ROAD
YOU HELPED A TOTAL STRANGER?
A SAMURAI LIKE YOU?!
IT IS BECAUSE I AM A SAMURAI THAT I COULD NOT LEAVE HER THERE
A SAMURAI'S DUTY IS TO DEFEND THE PEACE FOR THE COMMON PEOPLE
DEFEND THE PEACE?
FOR THE COMMON PEOPLE YOU SAY?!

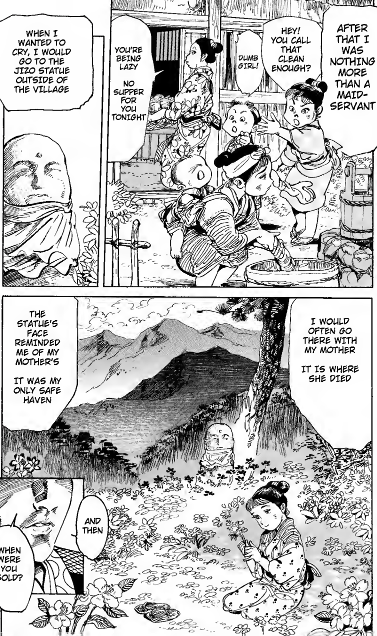

YES
THAT IS WHAT I BELIEVE TO BE THE TRUE DUTY OF A SAMURAI
カポン!
CLONK!
STOP!
THAT WILL ONLY MAKE IT WORSE!
ドッ!!
SLAP
GERMS HAVE INFECTED SMALL WOUNDS ON HER FEET AND CAUSED GANGRENE!

LEPROSY GETS WORSE BECAUSE IT ATTACKS THE NERVES AND MAKES THEM NUMB!
SNIP!
パキキッ!
RIP!


YOU APPEAR TO BE A RATHER SKILLED DOCTOR
HMPH!
I'M A QUACK! THE BIGGEST QUACK IN THE LAND!
EH?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
HOME
WHERE'S THAT?
NAKAIZU
YOU'RE CRAZY!
YOU THINK YOU CAN MAKE IT ALL THAT WAY ON THOSE FEET?
ドタタ!
WHUMP
YOU SEE?
MAY I ASK ...
WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?
FROM HAKATA IN KYUSHU


HOW OLD ARE YOU?
THIRTY-FOUR
THIRTY-FOUR ...
YOUR BODY IS THE WORSE FOR WEAR
YOU WORKED IN A RED-LIGHT DISTRICT, DIDN'T YOU?
YES, BEFORE I WAS SOLD TO A PLACE IN HAKATA, I WORKED IN KYOTO FOR TEN YEARS
A HARD LIFE OF PROSTITUTION FOLLOWED BY LEPROSY AND TUBERCULOSIS
WHAT AN UNHAPPY LIFE YOU'VE LED
MY LIFE IS NOT UNHAPPY!
EVEN WHEN I WAS LIVING IN A NIGHTMARE, I STILL HAD A DREAM
...

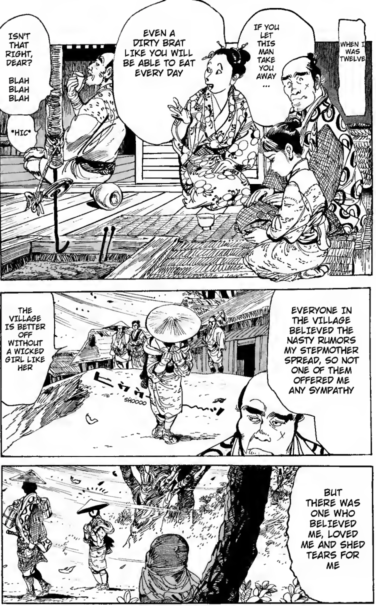

I'VE CLUNG TO LIFE BECAUSE OF THAT DREAM
COUGH
WHAT DREAM?
I HAVE TO MAKE MY DREAM COME TRUE WHILE I STILL HAVE LIFE IN ME
IS YOUR DREAM TO MEET YOUR PARENTS AGAIN?
...
GULP
MY MOTHER DIED WHEN I WAS FIVE YEARS OLD
SOON AFTER I HAD A STEPMOTHER WHO GAVE BIRTH TO THREE NEW SIBLINGS

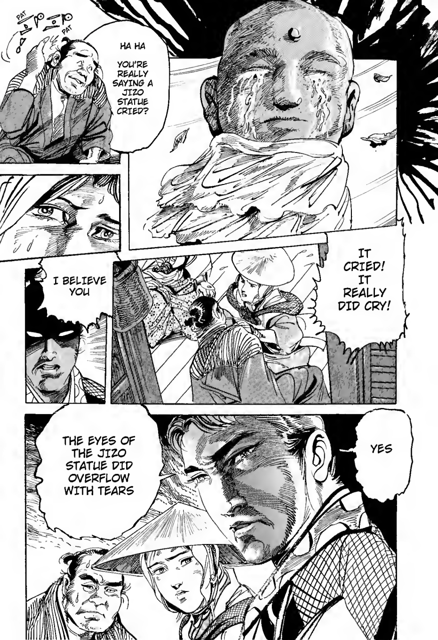

AFTER THAT I WAS NOTHING MORE THAN A MAID-SERVANT
HEY! YOU CALL THAT CLEAN ENOUGH?
DUMB GIRL!
YOU'RE BEING LAZY

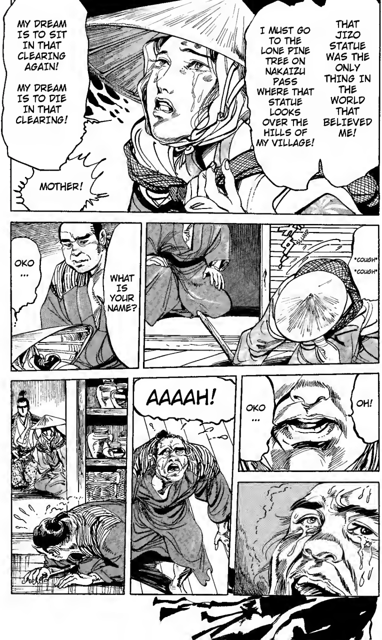
NO SUPPER FOR YOU TONIGHT
WHEN I WANTED TO CRY, I WOULD GO TO THE JIZO STATUE OUTSIDE OF THE VILLAGE
I WOULD OFTEN GO THERE WITH MY MOTHER

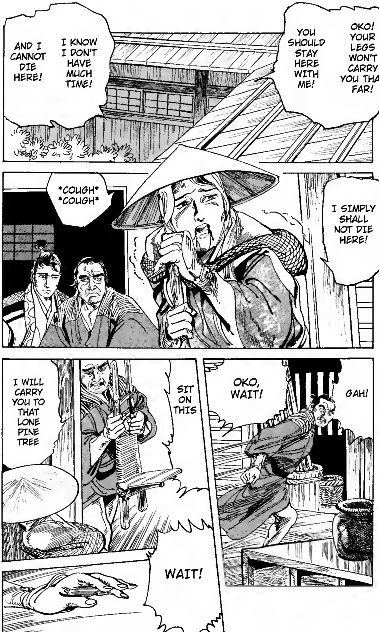
IT IS WHERE SHE DIED
THE STATUE'S FACE REMINDED ME OF MY MOTHER'S

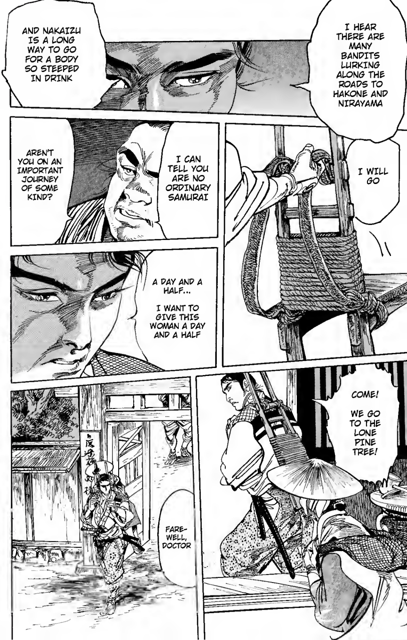
IT WAS MY ONLY SAFE HAVEN
AND THEN
WHEN WERE YOU SOLD?

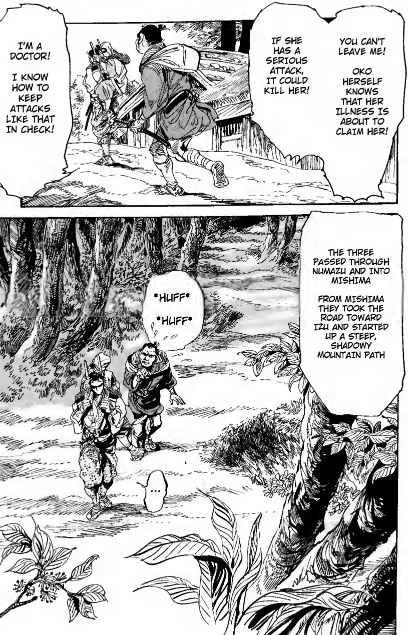

WHEN I WAS TWELVE
IF YOU LET THIS MAN TAKE YOU AWAY ...
EVEN A DIRTY BRAT LIKE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO EAT EVERY DAY
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, DEAR?
BLAH BLAH BLAH
HIC
EVERYONE IN THE VILLAGE BELIEVED THE NASTY RUMORS MY STEPMOTHER SPREAD, SO NOT ONE OF THEM OFFERED ME ANY SYMPATHY
THE VILLAGE IS BETTER OFF WITHOUT A WICKED GIRL LIKE HER
SHOOOO
BUT THERE WAS ONE WHO BELIEVED ME, LOVED ME AND SHED TEARS FOR ME


PAT
PAT
HA HA
YOU'RE REALLY SAYING A JIZO STATUE CRIED?
IT CRIED! IT REALLY DID CRY!
I BELIEVE YOU
YES
THE EYES OF THE JIZO STATUE DID OVERFLOW WITH TEARS


THAT JIZO STATUE WAS THE ONLY THING IN THE WORLD THAT BELIEVED ME!
I MUST GO TO THE LONE PINE TREE ON NAKAIZU PASS WHERE THAT STATUE LOOKS OVER THE HILLS OF MY VILLAGE!
MY DREAM IS TO SIT IN THAT CLEARING AGAIN!
MY DREAM IS TO DIE IN THAT CLEARING!
MOTHER!
SLUMP
COUGH
COUGH
WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
OKO ...
OH!
OKO ...
AAAAH!


OKO! YOUR LEGS WON'T CARRY YOU THAT FAR! YOU SHOULD STAY HERE WITH ME!
I KNOW I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME! AND I CANNOT DIE HERE!
I SIMPLY SHALL NOT DIE HERE!
COUGH *COUGH*
GAH!
OKO, WAIT!
SIT ON THIS
I WILL CARRY YOU TO THAT LONE PINE TREE
WAIT!

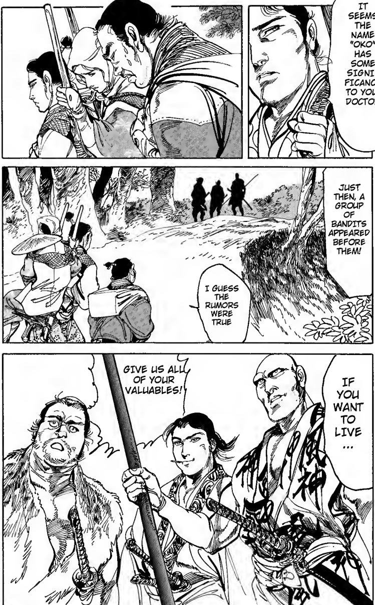

I HEAR THERE ARE MANY BANDITS LURKING ALONG THE ROADS TO HAKONE AND NIRAYAMA
AND NAKAIZU IS A LONG WAY TO GO FOR A BODY SO STEEPED IN DRINK
I CAN TELL YOU ARE NO ORDINARY SAMURAI
AREN'T YOU ON AN IMPORTANT JOURNEY OF SOME KIND?
A DAY AND A HALF...
I WANT TO GIVE THIS WOMAN A DAY AND A HALF
I WILL GO
COME!
WE GO TO THE LONE PINE TREE!
FARE-WELL, DOCTOR

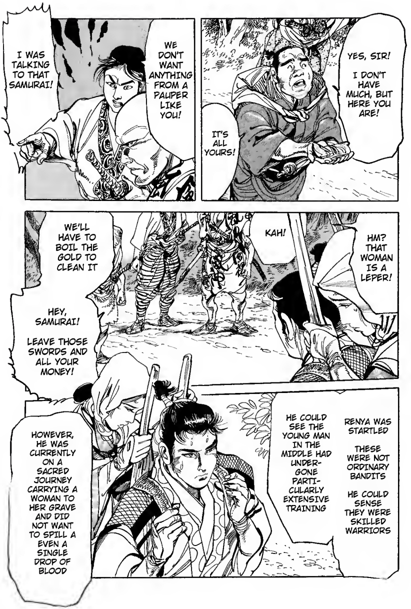

YOU CAN'T LEAVE ME!

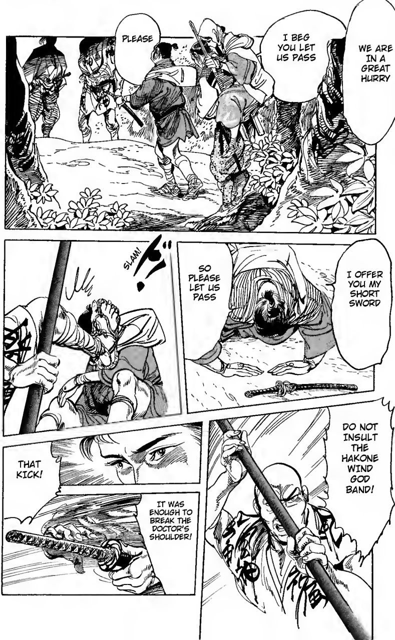
OKO HERSELF KNOWS THAT HER ILLNESS IS ABOUT TO CLAIM HER!
IF SHE HAS A SERIOUS ATTACK, IT COULD KILL HER!
I'M A DOCTOR!

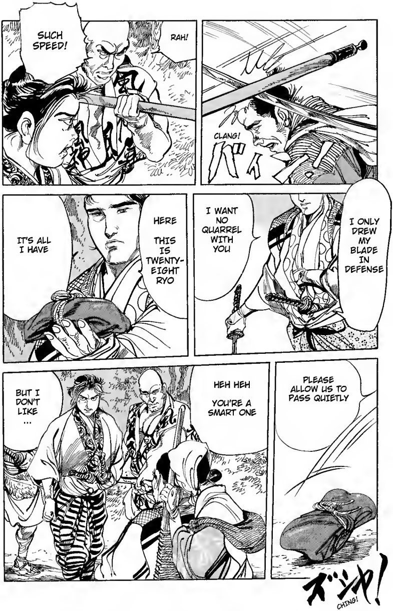
I KNOW HOW TO KEEP ATTACKS LIKE THAT IN CHECK!
THE THREE PASSED THROUGH NUMAZU AND INTO MISHIMA

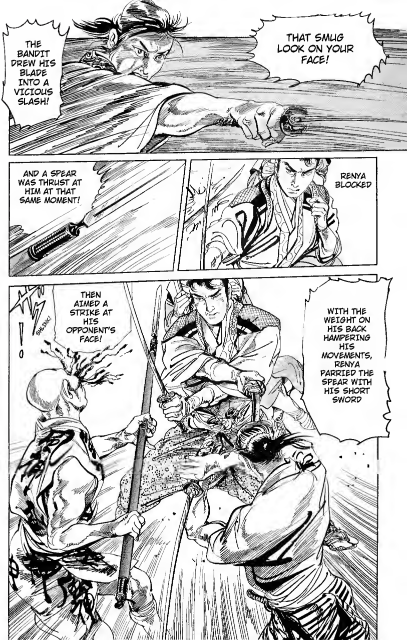
FROM MISHIMA THEY TOOK THE ROAD TOWARD IZU AND STARTED UP A STEEP, SHADOWY MOUNTAIN PATH
HUFF *HUFF*
...

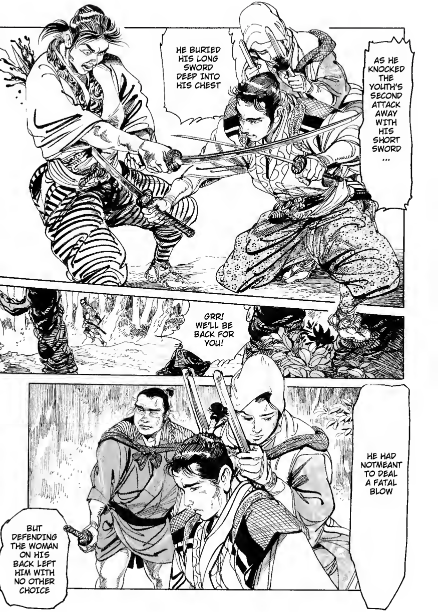

IT SEEMS THE NAME "OKO" HAS SOME SIGNIFICANCE TO YOU, DOCTOR
JUST THEN, A GROUP OF BANDITS APPEARED BEFORE THEM!
I GUESS THE RUMORS WERE TRUE
IF YOU WANT TO LIVE ...
GIVE US ALL OF YOUR VALUABLES!

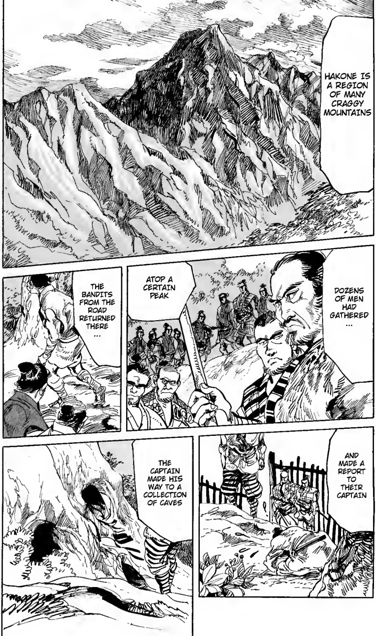

YES, SIR! I DON'T HAVE MUCH, BUT HERE YOU ARE!
IT'S ALL YOURS!
WE DON'T WANT ANYTHING FROM A PAUPER LIKE YOU!
I WAS TALKING TO THAT SAMURAI!
HM? THAT WOMAN IS A LEPER!
KAH!
WE'LL HAVE TO BOIL THE GOLD TO CLEAN IT
HEY, SAMURAI! LEAVE THOSE SWORDS AND ALL YOUR MONEY!
RENYA WAS STARTLED THESE WERE NOT ORDINARY BANDITS HE COULD SENSE THEY WERE SKILLED WARRIORS
HE COULD SEE THE YOUNG MAN IN THE MIDDLE HAD UNDERGONE PARTICULARLY EXTENSIVE TRAINING
HOWEVER, HE WAS CURRENTLY ON A SACRED JOURNEY CARRYING A WOMAN TO HER GRAVE AND DID NOT WANT TO SPILL A EVEN A SINGLE DROP OF BLOOD

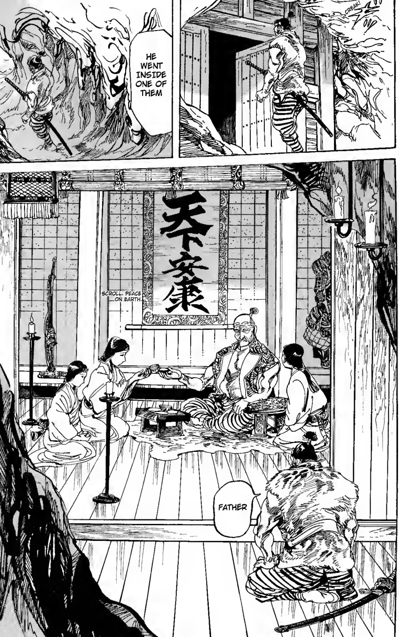

WE ARE IN A GREAT HURRY
I BEG YOU LET US PASS
PLEASE
I OFFER YOU MY SHORT SWORD
SO PLEASE LET US PASS
SLAM!
DO NOT INSULT THE HAKONE WIND GOD BAND!
THAT KICK!
IT WAS ENOUGH TO BREAK THE DOCTOR'S SHOULDER!

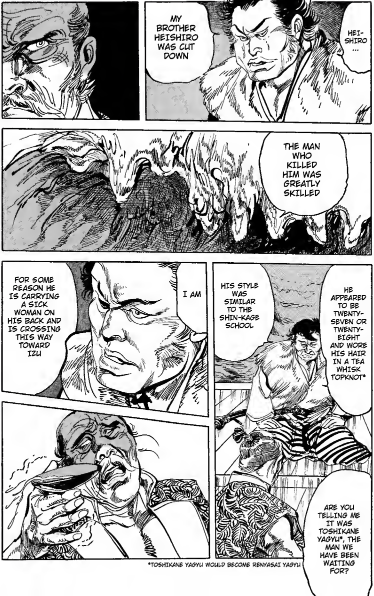

CLANG!
バイ
RAH!
SUCH SPEED!
I ONLY DREW MY BLADE IN DEFENSE
I WANT NO QUARREL WITH YOU
HERE THIS IS TWENTY-EIGHT RYO
IT'S ALL I HAVE
PLEASE ALLOW US TO PASS QUIETLY
HEH HEH YOU'RE A SMART ONE
BUT I DON'T LIKE …
ズシャ!
CHING!


THE BANDIT DREW HIS BLADE INTO A VICIOUS SLASH!
THAT SMUG LOOK ON YOUR FACE!
AND A SPEAR WAS THRUST AT HIM AT THAT SAME MOMENT!
RENYA BLOCKED
WITH THE WEIGHT ON HIS BACK HAMPERING HIS MOVEMENTS, RENYA PARRIED THE SPEAR WITH HIS SHORT SWORD
THEN AIMED A STRIKE AT HIS OPPONENT'S FACE!
SHLINK!
!


AS HE KNOCKED THE YOUTH'S SECOND ATTACK AWAY WITH HIS SHORT SWORD ...
HE BURIED HIS LONG SWORD DEEP INTO HIS CHEST
GRR! WE'LL BE BACK FOR YOU!
HE HAD NOTMEANT TO DEAL A FATAL BLOW
BUT DEFENDING THE WOMAN ON HIS BACK LEFT HIM WITH NO OTHER CHOICE

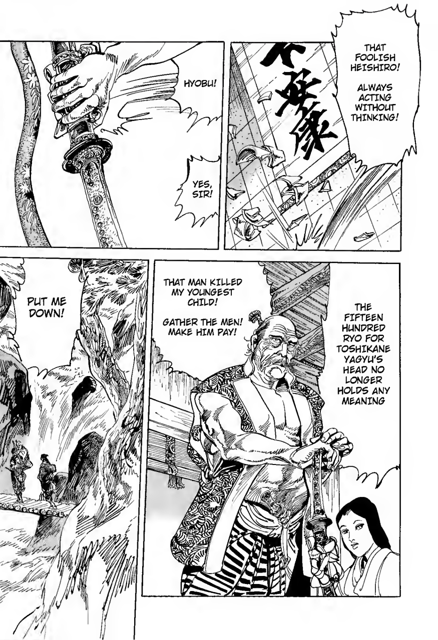

HAKONE IS A REGION OF MANY CRAGGY MOUNTAINS
THE BANDITS FROM THE ROAD RETURNED THERE ...
ATOP A CERTAIN PEAK
DOZENS OF MEN HAD GATHERED ...
AND MADE A REPORT TO THEIR CAPTAIN
THE CAPTAIN MADE HIS WAY TO A COLLECTION OF CAVES

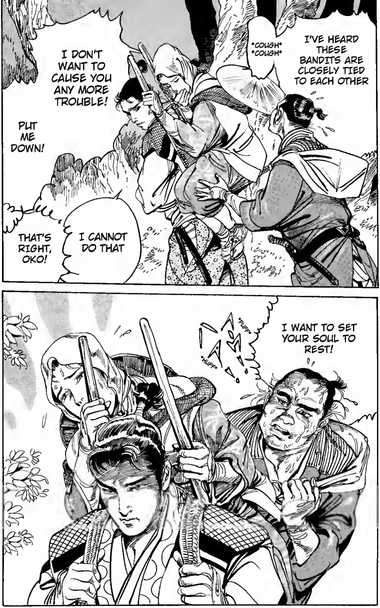

CREAK!
HE WENT INSIDE ONE OF THEM
天下安泰
SCROLL: PEACE ON EARTH
FATHER


MY BROTHER HEISHIRO WAS CUT DOWN
HEI-SHIRO ...
THE MAN WHO KILLED HIM WAS GREATLY SKILLED
HIS STYLE WAS SIMILAR TO THE SHIN-KAGE SCHOOL
HE APPEARED TO BE TWENTY-SEVEN OR TWENTY-EIGHT AND WORE HIS HAIR IN A TEA WHISK TOPKNOT*
ARE YOU TELLING ME IT WAS TOSHIKANE YAGYU*, THE MAN WE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR?
I AM
FOR SOME REASON HE IS CARRYING A SICK WOMAN ON HIS BACK AND IS CROSSING THIS WAY TOWARD IZU

*TOSHIKANE YAGYU WOULD BECOME RENYASAI YAGYU

*A TOPKNOT COMMONLY WORN BY YOUNG MEN THAT IS FLARED OUT, GIVING THE APPEARANCE OF A TEA WHISK

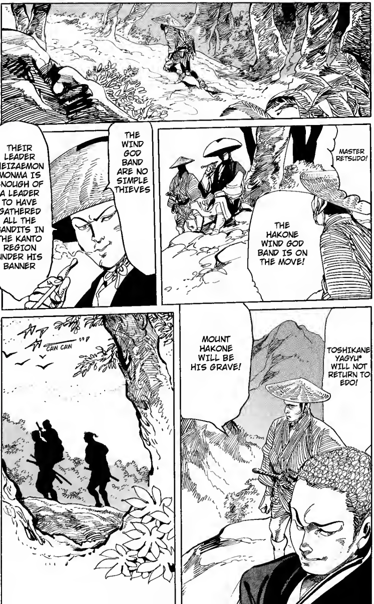

THAT FOOLISH HEISHIRO! ALWAYS ACTING WITHOUT THINKING!
HYOBU!
YES, SIR!
THE FIFTEEN HUNDRED RYO FOR TOSHIKANE YAGYU'S HEAD NO LONGER HOLDS ANY MEANING
THAT MAN KILLED MY YOUNGEST CHILD! GATHER THE MEN! MAKE HIM PAY!
PUT ME DOWN!


COUGH *COUGH*
I'VE HEARD THESE BANDITS ARE CLOSELY TIED TO EACH OTHER
I DON'T WANT TO CAUSE YOU ANY MORE TROUBLE!
PUT ME DOWN!
I CANNOT DO THAT
THAT'S RIGHT, OKO!
I WANT TO SET YOUR SOUL TO REST!
PUFF *HUFF*

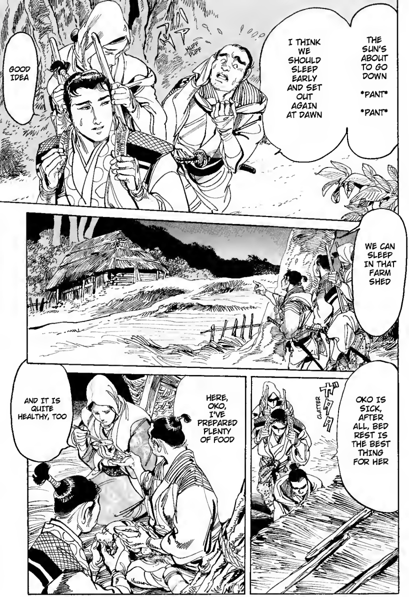
● CHAPTER 24 - FIN ●

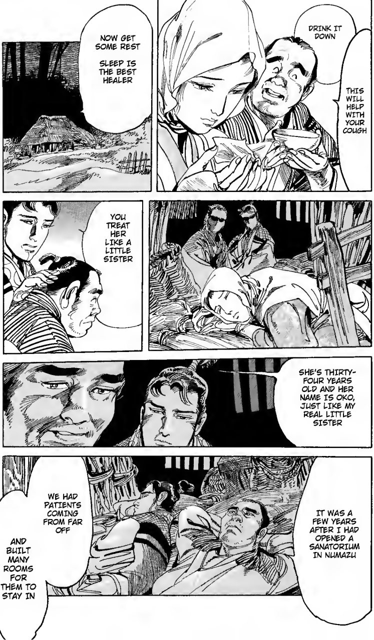
CHAPTER 25: RIGHT-MINDED HITTING

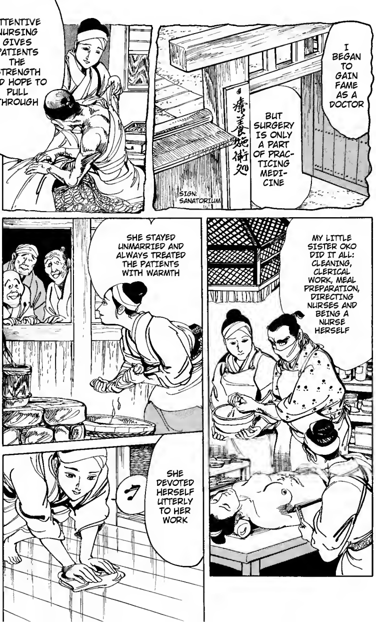
「第二十五話」正射必中（せいしゃひっちゅう）

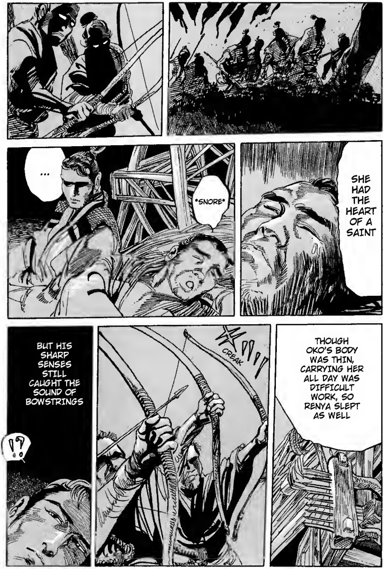

MASTER RETSUDO!
THE HAKONE WIND GOD BAND IS ON THE MOVE!
THE WIND GOD BAND ARE NO SIMPLE THIEVES
THEIR LEADER HEIZAEMON MONMA IS ENOUGH OF A LEADER TO HAVE GATHERED ALL THE BANDITS IN THE KANTO REGION UNDER HIS BANNER
TOSHIKANE YAGYU* WILL NOT RETURN TO EDO!
MOUNT HAKONE WILL BE HIS GRAVE!
CAW CAW

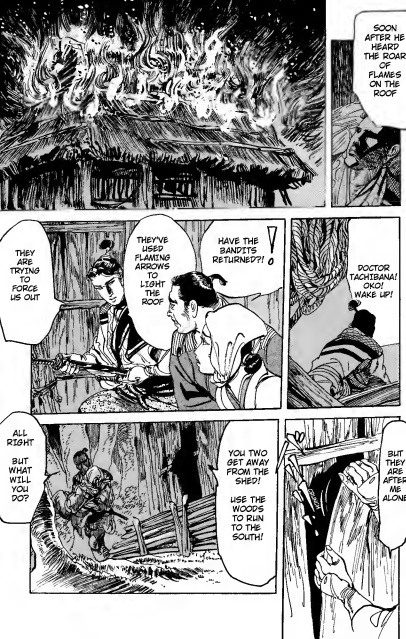
*TOSHIKANE YAGYU WOULD BECOME RENYASAI YAGYU

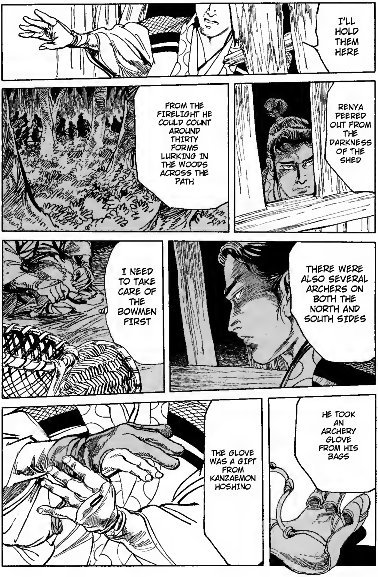

THE SUN'S ABOUT TO GO DOWN
PANT
PANT
I THINK WE SHOULD SLEEP EARLY AND SET OUT AGAIN AT DAWN
HUFF PUFF
GOOD IDEA
WE CAN SLEEP IN THAT FARM SHED
OKO IS SICK, AFTER ALL, BED REST IS THE BEST THING FOR HER
CLATTER
HERE, OKO, I'VE PREPARED PLENTY OF FOOD
AND IT IS QUITE HEALTHY, TOO

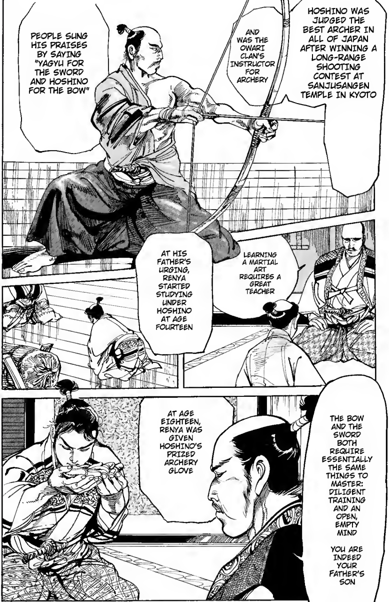

DRINK IT DOWN
THIS WILL HELP WITH YOUR COUGH
NOW GET SOME REST SLEEP IS THE BEST HEALER
YOU TREAT HER LIKE A LITTLE SISTER
SHE'S THIRTY-FOUR YEARS OLD AND HER NAME IS OKO, JUST LIKE MY REAL LITTLE SISTER
IT WAS A FEW YEARS AFTER I HAD OPENED A SANATORIUM IN NUMAZU
WE HAD PATIENTS COMING FROM FAR OFF
AND BUILT MANY ROOMS FOR THEM TO STAY IN

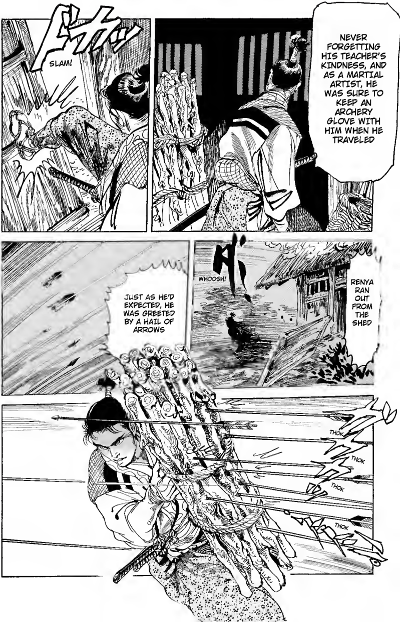

I BEGAN TO GAIN FAME AS A DOCTOR
BUT SURGERY IS ONLY A PART OF PRACTICING MEDICINE
SIGN: SANATORIUM
ATTENTIVE NURSING GIVES PATIENTS THE STRENGTH AND HOPE TO PULL THROUGH
MY LITTLE SISTER OKO DID IT ALL: CLEANING, CLERICAL WORK, MEAL PREPARATION, DIRECTING NURSES AND BEING A NURSE HERSELF
SHE STAYED UNMARRIED AND ALWAYS TREATED THE PATIENTS WITH WARMTH
SHE DEVOTED HERSELF UTTERLY TO HER WORK
♪

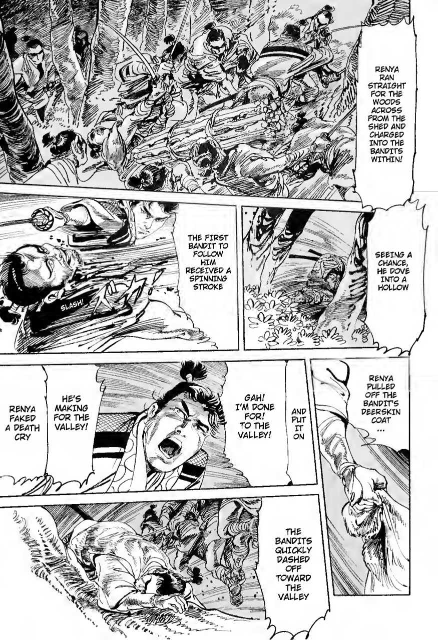

SHE HAD THE HEART OF A SAINT
SNORE
...
THOUGH OKO'S BODY WAS THIN, CARRYING HER ALL DAY WAS DIFFICULT WORK, SO RENYA SLEPT AS WELL
CREAK
BUT HIS SHARP SENSES STILL CAUGHT THE SOUND OF BOWSTRINGS
!?

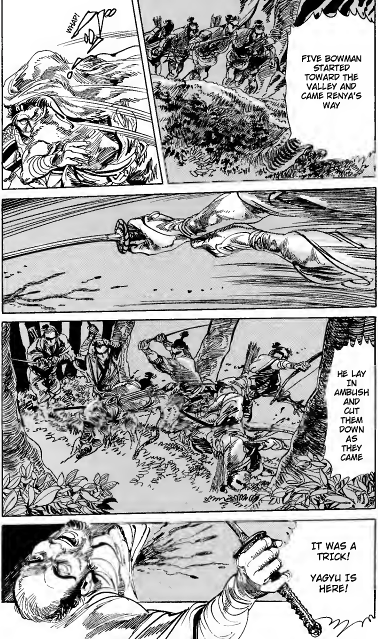

SOON AFTER HE HEARD THE ROAR OF FLAMES ON THE ROOF
DOCTOR TACHIBANA! OKO! WAKE UP!
!
HAVE THE BANDITS RETURNED?!
THEY'VE USED FLAMING ARROWS TO LIGHT THE ROOF
THEY ARE TRYING TO FORCE US OUT
BUT THEY ARE AFTER ME ALONE
CRUNCH
YOU TWO GET AWAY FROM THE SHED! USE THE WOODS TO RUN TO THE SOUTH!
ALL RIGHT BUT WHAT WILL YOU DO?

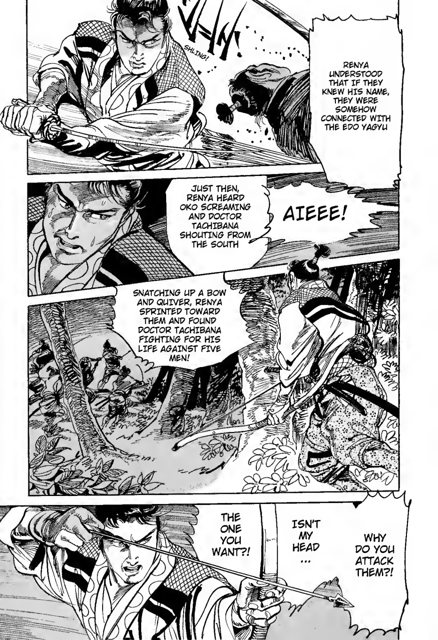

I'LL HOLD THEM HERE
RENYA PEERED OUT FROM THE DARKNESS OF THE SHED
FROM THE FIRELIGHT HE COULD COUNT AROUND THIRTY FORMS LURKING IN THE WOODS ACROSS THE PATH
THERE WERE ALSO SEVERAL ARCHERS ON BOTH THE NORTH AND SOUTH SIDES
I NEED TO TAKE CARE OF THE BOWMEN FIRST
HE TOOK AN ARCHERY GLOVE FROM HIS BAGS
THE GLOVE WAS A GIFT FROM KANZAEMON HOSHINO

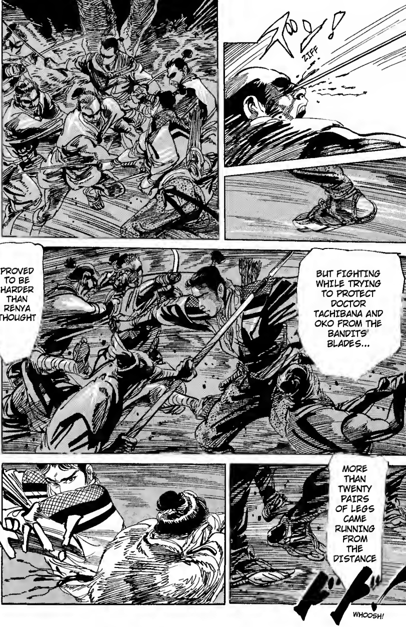

HOSHINO WAS JUDGED THE BEST ARCHER IN ALL OF JAPAN AFTER WINNING A LONG-RANGE SHOOTING CONTEST AT SANJUSANGEN TEMPLE IN KYOTO
AND WAS THE OWARI CLAN'S INSTRUCTOR FOR ARCHERY
PEOPLE SUNG HIS PRAISES BY SAYING "YAGYU FOR THE SWORD AND HOSHINO FOR THE BOW"
LEARNING A MARTIAL ART REQUIRES A GREAT TEACHER
AT HIS FATHER'S URGING, RENYA STARTED STUDYING UNDER HOSHINO AT AGE FOURTEEN
THE BOW AND THE SWORD BOTH REQUIRE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME THINGS TO MASTER: DILIGENT TRAINING AND AN OPEN, EMPTY MIND
YOU ARE INDEED YOUR FATHER'S SON
AT AGE EIGHTEEN, RENYA WAS GIVEN HOSHINO'S PRIZED ARCHERY GLOVE

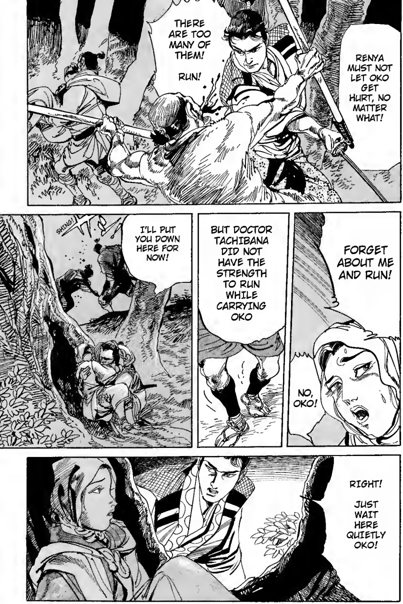

NEVER FORGETTING HIS TEACHER'S KINDNESS, AND AS A MARTIAL ARTIST, HE WAS SURE TO KEEP AN ARCHERY GLOVE WITH HIM WHEN HE TRAVELED
ドカッ
SLAM!
RENYA RAN OUT FROM THE SHED
ダッ
WHOOSH!
JUST AS HE'D EXPECTED, HE WAS GREETED BY A HAIL OF ARROWS
THOK
THOK
THOK
THOK

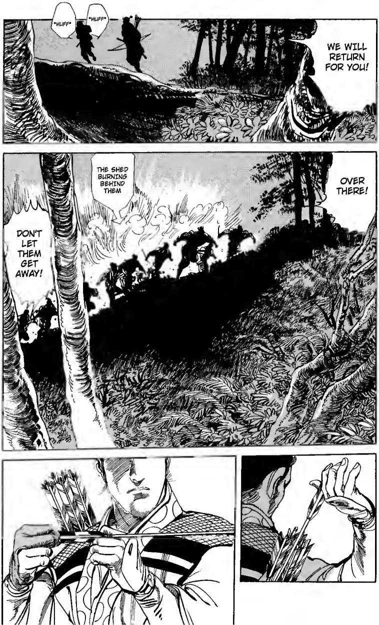

RENYA RAN STRAIGHT FOR THE WOODS ACROSS FROM THE SHED AND CHARGED INTO THE BANDITS WITHIN!
THE FIRST BANDIT TO FOLLOW HIM RECEIVED A SPINNING STROKE
SLASH!
SEEING A CHANCE, HE DOVE INTO A HOLLOW
RENYA PULLED OFF THE BANDIT'S DEERSKIN COAT ...
AND PUT IT ON
GAH! I'M DONE FOR! TO THE VALLEY!
RENYA FAKED A DEATH CRY
HE'S MAKING FOR THE VALLEY!
THE BANDITS QUICKLY DASHED OFF TOWARD THE VALLEY

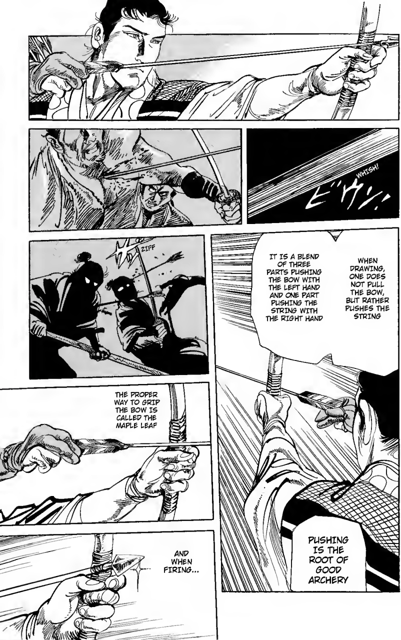

WHAP!
FIVE BOWMAN STARTED TOWARD THE VALLEY AND CAME RENYA'S WAY
HE LAY IN AMBUSH AND CUT THEM DOWN AS THEY CAME
IT WAS A TRICK!
YAGYU IS HERE!

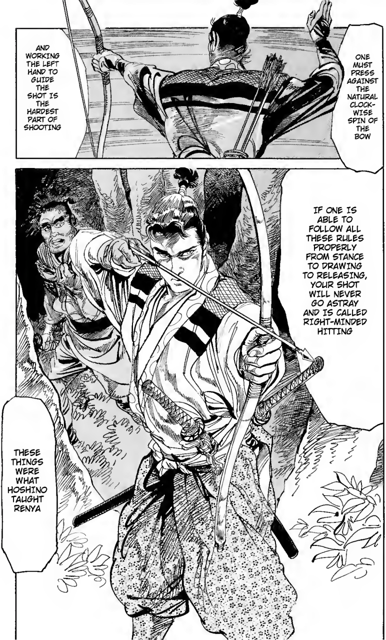

SHLING!
RENYA UNDERSTOOD THAT IF THEY KNEW HIS NAME, THEY WERE SOMEHOW CONNECTED WITH THE EDO YAGYU
JUST THEN, RENYA HEARD OKO SCREAMING AND DOCTOR TACHIBANA SHOUTING FROM THE SOUTH
AIEEE!
SNATCHING UP A BOW AND QUIVER, RENYA SPRINTED TOWARD THEM AND FOUND DOCTOR TACHIBANA FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE AGAINST FIVE MEN!
ISN'T MY HEAD ...
THE ONE YOU WANT?!
WHY DO YOU ATTACK THEM?!

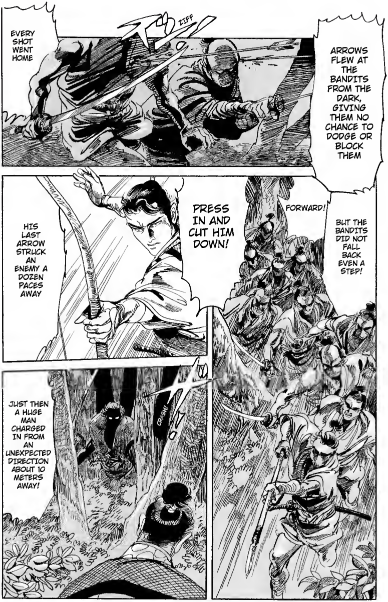

ZIFF
BUT FIGHTING WHILE TRYING TO PROTECT DOCTOR TACHIBANA AND OKO FROM THE BANDITS' BLADES...
PROVED TO BE HARDER THAN RENYA THOUGHT
MORE THAN TWENTY PAIRS OF LEGS CAME RUNNING FROM THE DISTANCE
WHOOSH!
SLASH!

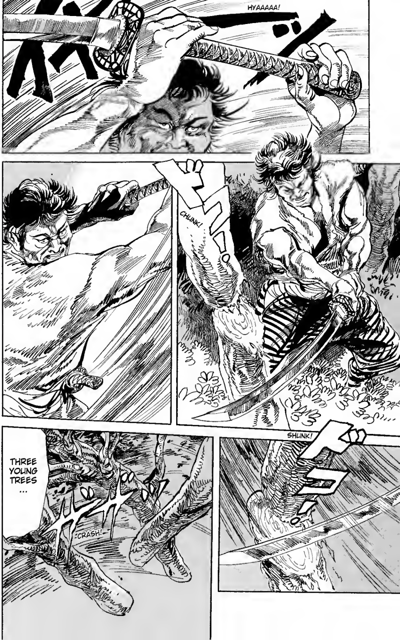

RENYA MUST NOT LET OKO GET HURT, NO MATTER WHAT!
THERE ARE TOO MANY OF THEM!
RUN!
FORGET ABOUT ME AND RUN!
NO, OKO!
BUT DOCTOR TACHIBANA DID NOT HAVE THE STRENGTH TO RUN WHILE CARRYING OKO
I'LL PUT YOU DOWN HERE FOR NOW!
SHING!
RIGHT!
JUST WAIT HERE QUIETLY OKO!

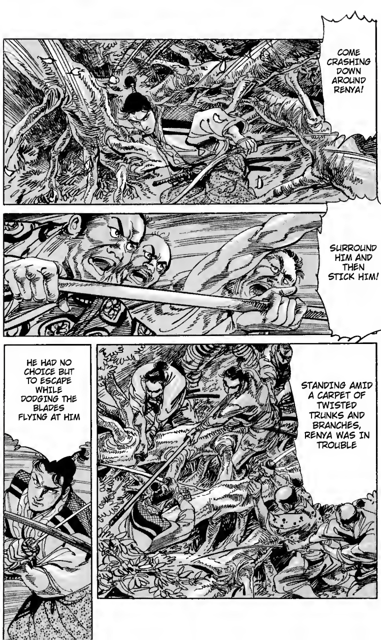

HUFF
HUFF
WE WILL RETURN FOR YOU!
THE SHED BURNING BEHIND THEM
OVER THERE!
DON'T LET THEM GET AWAY!

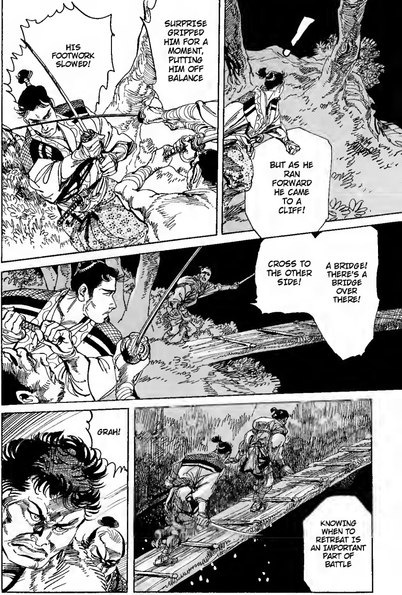

WHISH!
ビュン!
WHEN DRAWING, ONE DOES NOT PULL THE BOW, BUT RATHER PUSHES THE STRING
IT IS A BLEND OF THREE PARTS PUSHING THE BOW WITH THE LEFT HAND AND ONE PART PUSHING THE STRING WITH THE RIGHT HAND
PUSHING IS THE ROOT OF GOOD ARCHERY
ZIFF
THE PROPER WAY TO GRIP THE BOW IS CALLED THE MAPLE LEAF
AND WHEN FIRING...

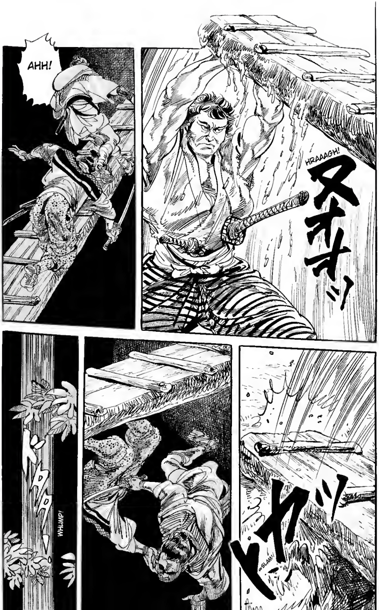

ONE MUST PRESS AGAINST THE NATURAL CLOCKWISE SPIN OF THE BOW
AND WORKING THE LEFT HAND TO GUIDE THE SHOT IS THE HARDEST PART OF SHOOTING
IF ONE IS ABLE TO FOLLOW ALL THESE RULES PROPERLY FROM STANCE TO DRAWING TO RELEASING, YOUR SHOT WILL NEVER GO ASTRAY AND IS CALLED RIGHT-MINDED HITTING
THESE THINGS WERE WHAT HOSHINO TAUGHT RENYA

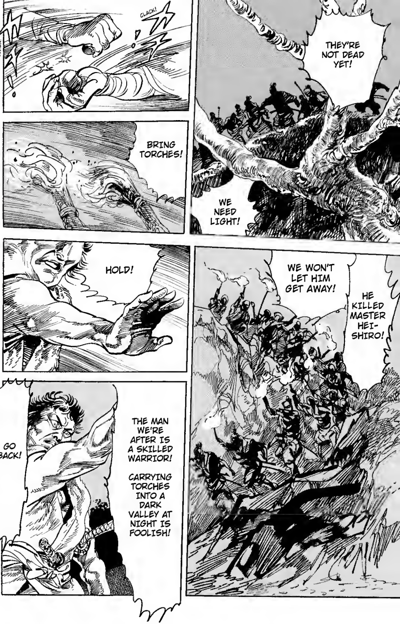

ARROWS FLEW AT THE BANDITS FROM THE DARK, GIVING THEM NO CHANCE TO DODGE OR BLOCK THEM
ZIFF
EVERY SHOT WENT HOME
BUT THE BANDITS DID NOT FALL BACK EVEN A STEP!
FORWARD!
PRESS IN AND CUT HIM DOWN!
HIS LAST ARROW STRUCK AN ENEMY A DOZEN PACES AWAY
CRASH!
JUST THEN A HUGE MAN CHARGED IN FROM AN UNEXPECTED DIRECTION ABOUT 10 METERS AWAY!

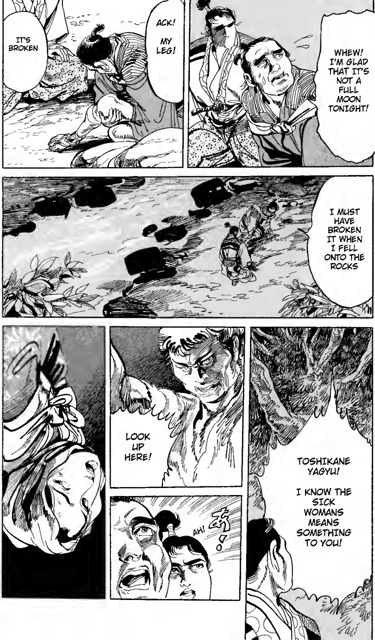

HYAAAAA!
CHUNK!
SHUNK!
THREE YOUNG TREES ...
CRASH!

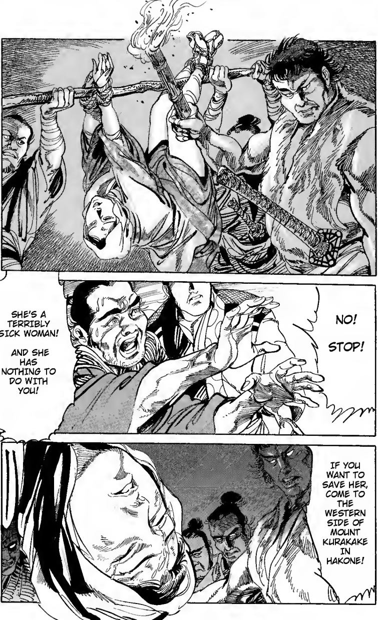

COME CRASHING DOWN AROUND RENYA!
SURROUND HIM AND THEN STICK HIM!
STANDING AMID A CARPET OF TWISTED TRUNKS AND BRANCHES, RENYA WAS IN TROUBLE
HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ESCAPE WHILE DODGING THE BLADES FLYING AT HIM

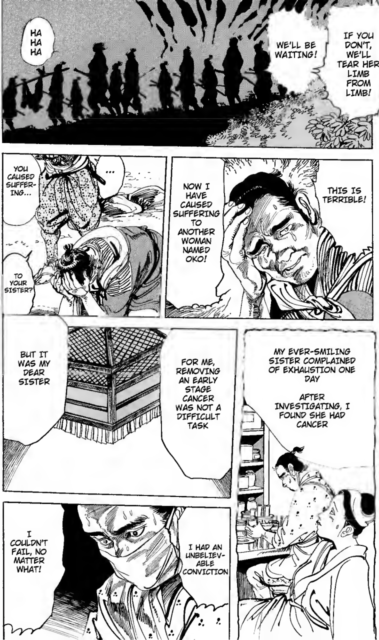

!
BUT AS HE RAN FORWARD HE CAME TO A CLIFF!
SURPRISE GRIPPED HIM FOR A MOMENT, PUTTING HIM OFF BALANCE
HIS FOOTWORK SLOWED!
A BRIDGE! THERE'S A BRIDGE OVER THERE!
CROSS TO THE OTHER SIDE!
KNOWING WHEN TO RETREAT IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF BATTLE
GRAH!

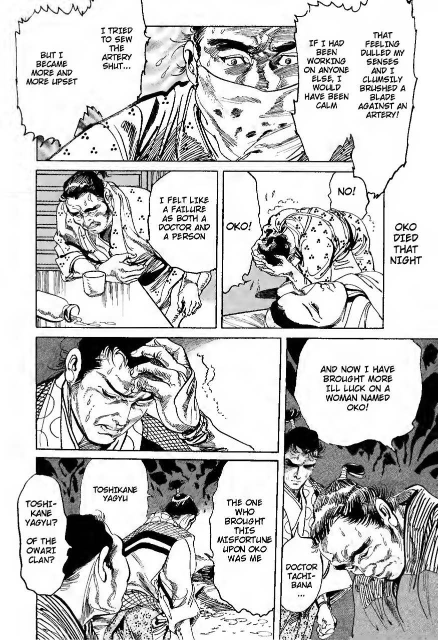

HRAAAGH!
ヌオオッ
AHH!
SLAM!
ドカッ
WHUMP!
ドダダ

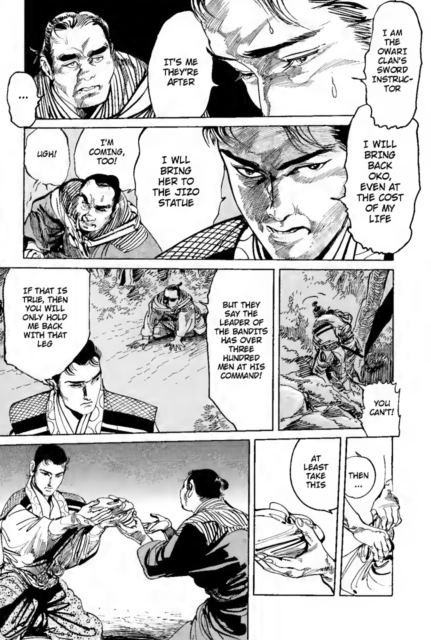

THEY'RE NOT DEAD YET!
WE NEED LIGHT!
CLACK!
CLACK!
BRING TORCHES!
WE WON'T LET HIM GET AWAY!
HE KILLED MASTER HEI-SHIRO!
HOLD!
GO BACK!
THE MAN WE'RE AFTER IS A SKILLED WARRIOR!
CARRYING TORCHES INTO A DARK VALLEY AT NIGHT IS FOOLISH!

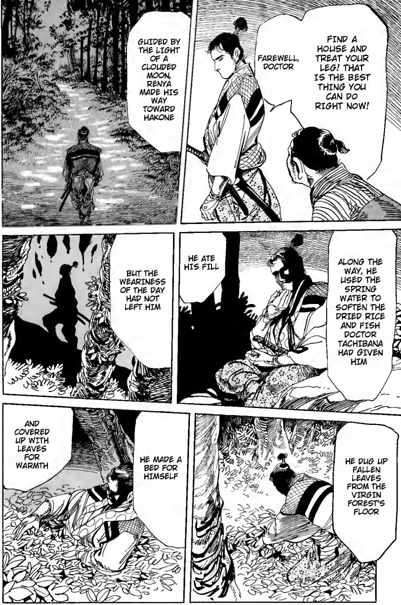

WHEW! I'M GLAD THAT IT'S NOT A FULL MOON TONIGHT!
ACK! MY LEG!
IT'S BROKEN
I MUST HAVE BROKEN IT WHEN I FELL ONTO THE ROCKS
TOSHIKANE YAGYU! I KNOW THE SICK WOMANS MEANS SOMETHING TO YOU!
LOOK UP HERE!
あっ
AH!

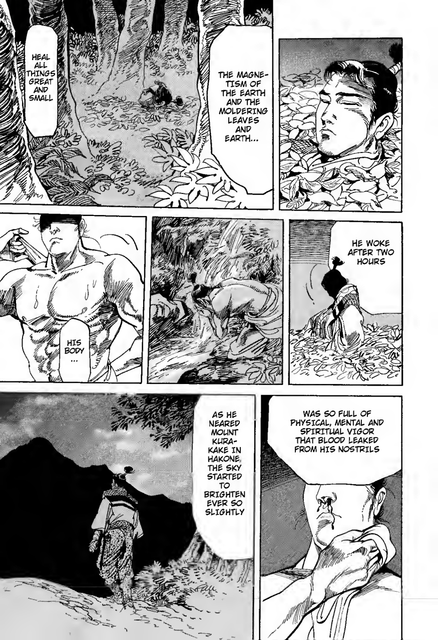

NO!
STOP!
SHE'S A TERRIBLY SICK WOMAN!
AND SHE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU!
IF YOU WANT TO SAVE HER, COME TO THE WESTERN SIDE OF MOUNT KURAKAKE IN HAKONE!

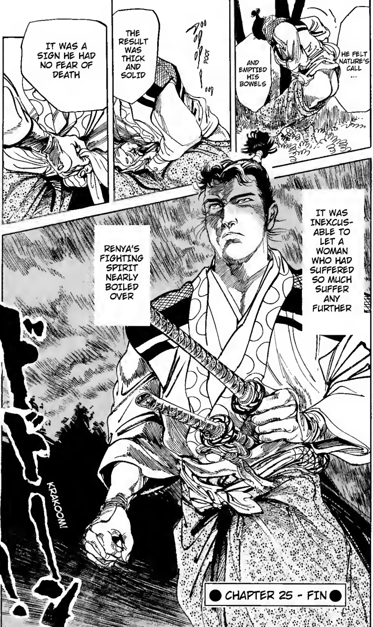

IF YOU DON'T, WE'LL TEAR HER LIMB FROM LIMB!
WE'LL BE WAITING!
HA HA HA
THIS IS TERRIBLE!
NOW I HAVE CAUSED SUFFERING TO ANOTHER WOMAN NAMED OKO!
...
YOU CAUSED SUFFERING...
TO YOUR SISTER?
MY EVER-SMILING SISTER COMPLAINED OF EXHAUSTION ONE DAY
AFTER INVESTIGATING, I FOUND SHE HAD CANCER
FOR ME, REMOVING AN EARLY STAGE CANCER WAS NOT A DIFFICULT TASK
BUT IT WAS MY DEAR SISTER
I HAD AN UNBELIEVABLE CONVICTION
I COULDN'T FAIL, NO MATTER WHAT!


THAT FEELING DULLED MY SENSES AND I CLUMSILY BRUSHED A BLADE AGAINST AN ARTERY!
IF I HAD BEEN WORKING ON ANYONE ELSE, I WOULD HAVE BEEN CALM
I TRIED TO SEW THE ARTERY SHUT...
BUT I BECAME MORE AND MORE UPSET
OKO DIED THAT NIGHT
NO!
OKO!
I FELT LIKE A FAILURE AS BOTH A DOCTOR AND A PERSON
AND NOW I HAVE BROUGHT MORE ILL LUCK ON A WOMAN NAMED OKO!
DOCTOR TACHIBANA ...
THE ONE WHO BROUGHT THIS MISFORTUNE UPON OKO WAS ME
TOSHIKANE YAGYU
TOSHIKANE YAGYU? OF THE OWARI CLAN?


I AM THE OWARI CLAN'S SWORD INSTRUCTOR
IT'S ME THEY'RE AFTER
...
I WILL BRING BACK OKO, EVEN AT THE COST OF MY LIFE
I WLL BRING HER TO THE JIZO STATUE
I'M COMING, TOO!
UGH!
YOU CAN'T!
BUT THEY SAY THE LEADER OF THE BANDITS HAS OVER THREE HUNDRED MEN AT HIS COMMAND!
IF THAT IS TRUE, THEN YOU WILL ONLY HOLD ME BACK WITH THAT LEG
THEN ...
AT LEAST TAKE THIS


FIND A HOUSE AND TREAT YOUR LEG! THAT IS THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW!
FAREWELL, DOCTOR
GUIDED BY THE LIGHT OF A CLOUDED MOON, RENYA MADE HIS WAY TOWARD HAKONE
ALONG THE WAY, HE USED THE SPRING WATER TO SOFTEN THE DRIED RICE AND FISH DOCTOR TACHIBANA HAD GIVEN HIM
HE ATE HIS FILL
BUT THE WEARINESS OF THE DAY HAD NOT LEFT HIM
HE DUG UP FALLEN LEAVES FROM THE VIRGIN FOREST'S FLOOR
HE MADE A BED FOR HIMSELF
AND COVERED UP WITH LEAVES FOR WARMTH


THE MAGNETISM OF THE EARTH AND THE MOLDERING LEAVES AND EARTH...
HEAL ALL THINGS GREAT AND SMALL
HE WOKE AFTER TWO HOURS
HIS BODY ...
WAS SO FULL OF PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL VIGOR THAT BLOOD LEAKED FROM HIS NOSTRILS
AS HE NEARED MOUNT KURAKAKE IN HAKONE, THE SKY STARTED TO BRIGHTEN EVER SO SLIGHTLY

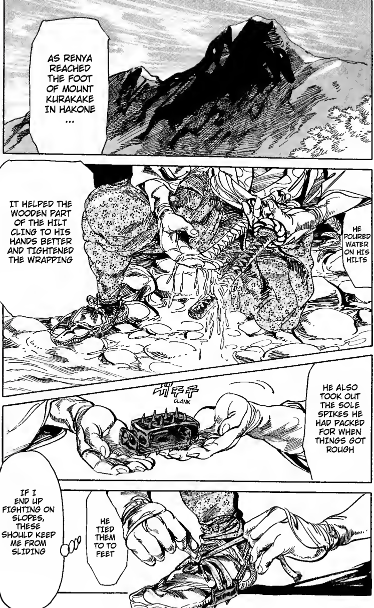

HE FELT NATURE'S CALL ...
AND EMPTIED HIS BOWELS
POOT
THE RESULT WAS THICK AND SOLID
IT WAS A SIGN HE HAD NO FEAR OF DEATH
IT WAS INEXCUSABLE TO LET A WOMAN WHO HAD SUFFERED SO MUCH SUFFER ANY FURTHER
RENYA'S FIGHTING SPIRIT NEARLY BOILED OVER
KRAKOOM!

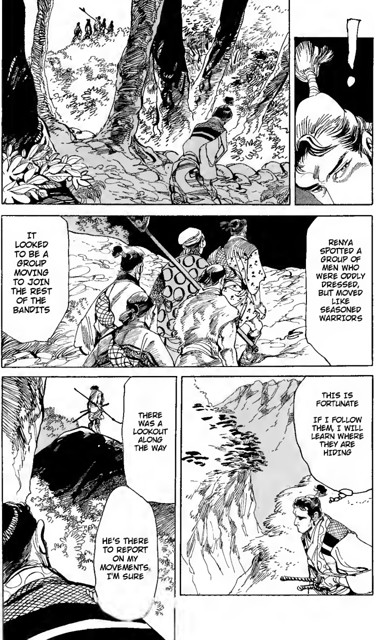
● CHAPTER 25 - FIN ●

CHAPTER 26: COMPANY ON THE ROAD TO DEATH

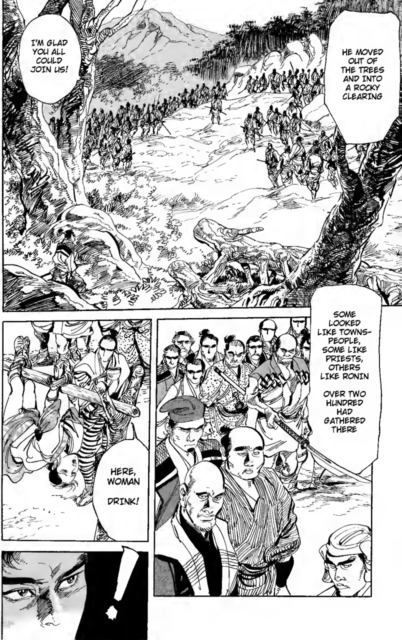
「第二十六話」

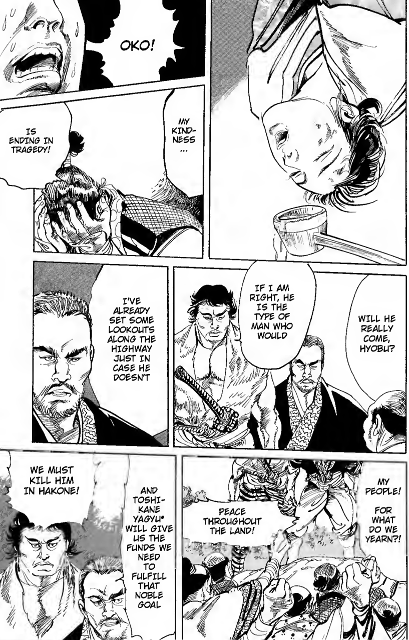
死出の旅路の道連れに


AS RENYA REACHED THE FOOT OF MOUNT KURAKAKE IN HAKONE ...
HE POURED WATER ON HIS HILTS
IT HELPED THE WOODEN PART OF THE HILT CLING TO HIS HANDS BETTER AND TIGHTENED THE WRAPPING
HE ALSO TOOK OUT THE SOLE SPIKES HE HAD PACKED FOR WHEN THINGS GOT ROUGH
ガチチ
CLANK
HE TIED THEM TO TO FEET
IF I END UP FIGHTING ON SLOPES, THESE SHOULD KEEP ME FROM SLIDING


!
RENYA SPOTTED A GROUP OF MEN WHO WERE ODDLY DRESSED, BUT MOVED LIKE SEASONED WARRIORS
IT LOOKED TO BE A GROUP MOVING TO JOIN THE REST OF THE BANDITS
THIS IS FORTUNATE

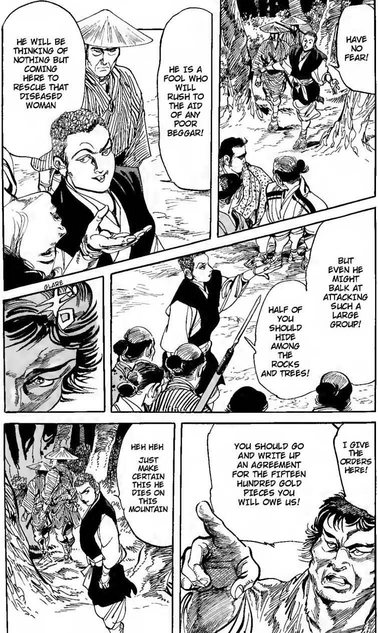
IF I FOLLOW THEM, I WILL LEARN WHERE THEY ARE HIDING
THERE WAS A LOOKOUT ALONG THE WAY
HE'S THERE TO REPORT ON MY MOVEMENTS I'M SURE

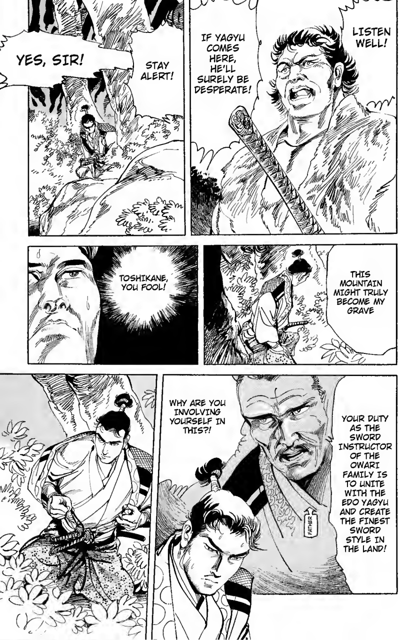

HE MOVED OUT OF THE TREES AND INTO A ROCKY CLEARING
I'M GLAD YOU ALL COULD JOIN US!
SOME LOOKED LIKE TOWNSPEOPLE, SOME LIKE PRIESTS, OTHERS LIKE RONIN
OVER TWO HUNDRED HAD GATHERED THERE
HERE, WOMAN
DRINK!
!

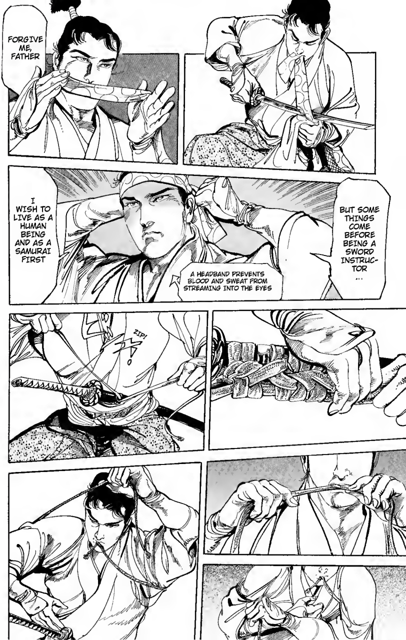

OKO!
MY KINDNESS ...
IS ENDING IN TRAGEDY!
WILL HE REALLY COME, HYOBU?
IF I AM RIGHT, HE IS THE TYPE OF MAN WHO WOULD
I'VE ALREADY SET SOME LOOKOUTS ALONG THE HIGHWAY JUST IN CASE HE DOESN'T
MY PEOPLE! FOR WHAT DO WE YEARN?!
PEACE THROUGHOUT THE LAND!
AND TOSHIKANE YAGYU* WILL GIVE US THE FUNDS WE NEED TO FULFILL THAT NOBLE GOAL
WE MUST KILL HIM IN HAKONE!

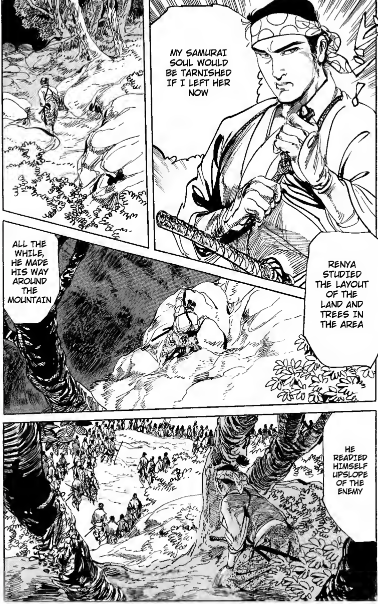
---

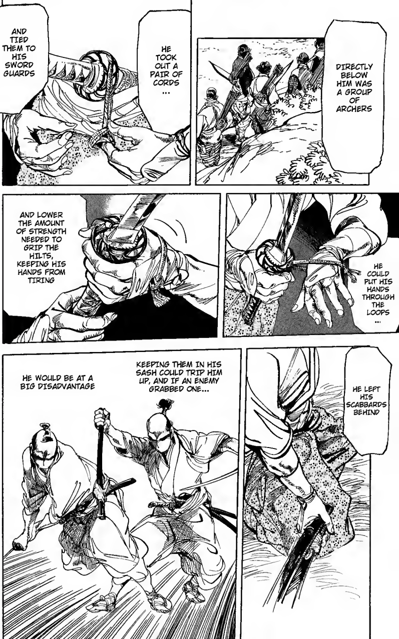
*TOSHIKANE YAGYU WOULD BECOME RENYASAI YAGYU

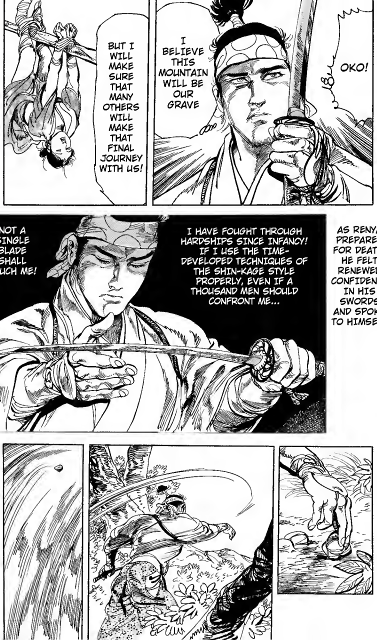

HE WILL BE THINKING OF NOTHING BUT COMING HERE TO RESCUE THAT DISEASED WOMAN
HE IS A FOOL WHO WILL RUSH TO THE AID OF ANY POOR BEGGAR!
HAVE NO FEAR!
GLARE
BUT EVEN HE MIGHT BALK AT ATTACKING SUCH A LARGE GROUP!
HALF OF YOU SHOULD HIDE AMONG THE ROCKS AND TREES!
HEH HEH
JUST MAKE CERTAIN THIS HE DIES ON THIS MOUNTAIN
I GIVE THE ORDERS HERE!
YOU SHOULD GO AND WRITE UP AN AGREEMENT FOR THE FIFTEEN HUNDRED GOLD PIECES YOU WILL OWE US!

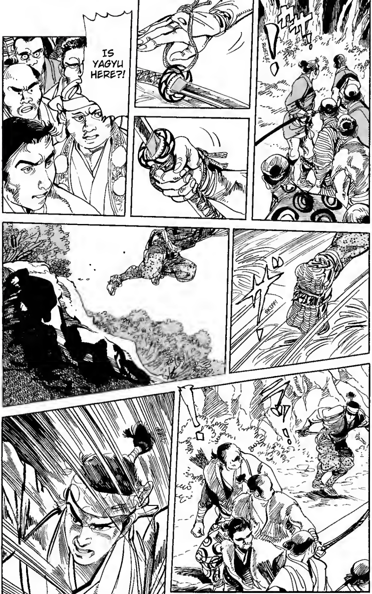

LISTEN WELL!
IF YAGYU COMES HERE, HE'LL SURELY BE DESPERATE!
STAY ALERT!
YES, SIR!
THIS MOUNTAIN MIGHT TRULY BECOME MY GRAVE
TOSHIKANE, YOU FOOL!
YOUR DUTY AS THE SWORD INSTRUCTOR OF THE OWARI FAMILY IS TO UNITE WITH THE EDO YAGYU AND CREATE THE FINEST SWORD STYLE IN THE LAND!
FATHER
WHY ARE YOU INVOLVING YOURSELF IN THIS?!

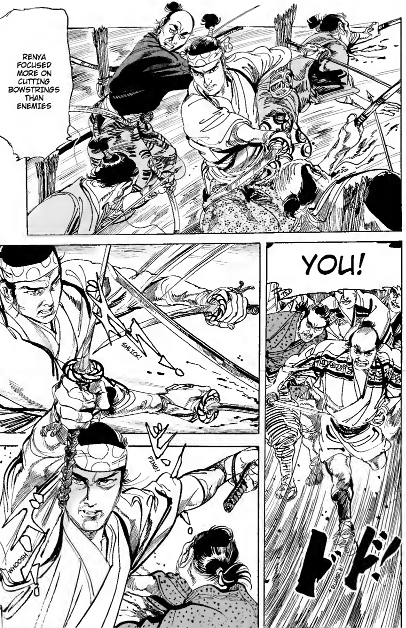

FORGIVE ME, FATHER
BUT SOME THINGS COME BEFORE BEING A SWORD INSTRUCTOR ...
I WISH TO LIVE AS A HUMAN BEING AND AS A SAMURAI FIRST
A HEADBAND PREVENTS BLOOD AND SWEAT FROM STREAMING INTO THE EYES
ZIP!

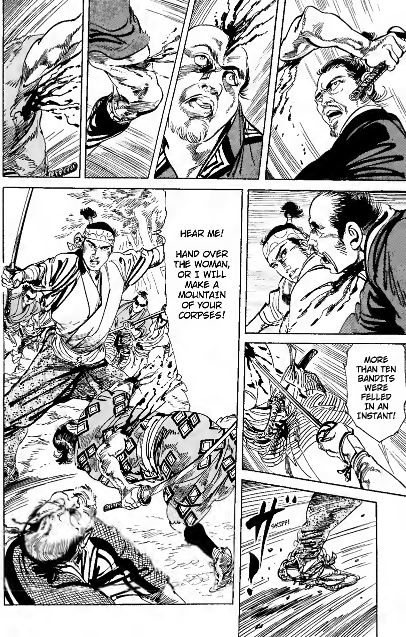

MY SAMURAI SOUL WOULD BE TARNISHED IF I LEFT HER NOW
ZIP!
RENYA STUDIED THE LAYOUT OF THE LAND AND TREES IN THE AREA
ALL THE WHILE, HE MADE HIS WAY AROUND THE MOUNTAIN
HE READIED HIMSELF UPSLOPE OF THE ENEMY

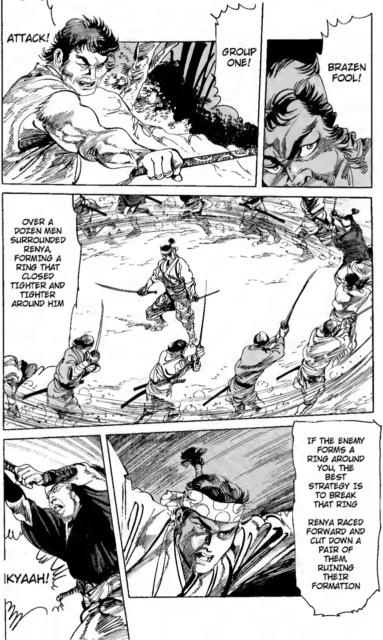

DIRECTLY BELOW HIM WAS A GROUP OF ARCHERS
HE TOOK OUT A PAIR OF CORDS ...
AND TIED THEM TO HIS SWORD GUARDS
HE COULD PUT HIS HANDS THROUGH THE LOOPS ...
AND LOWER THE AMOUNT OF STRENGTH NEEDED TO GRIP THE HILTS, KEEPING HIS HANDS FROM TIRING
HE LEFT HIS SCABBARDS BEHIND
KEEPING THEM IN HIS SASH COULD TRIP HIM UP, AND IF AN ENEMY GRABBED ONE...
HE WOULD BE AT A BIG DISADVANTAGE

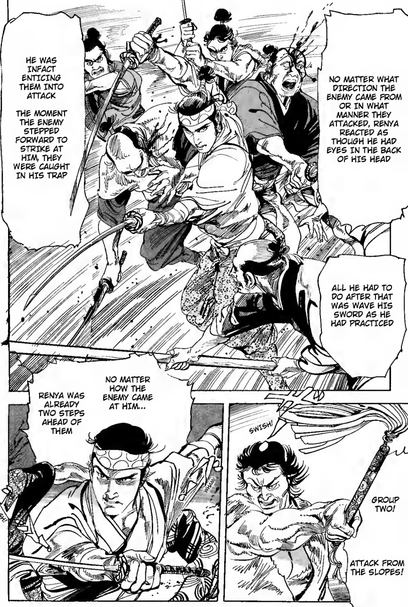

OKO!
I BELIEVE THIS MOUNTAIN WILL BE OUR GRAVE
BUT I WILL MAKE SURE THAT MANY OTHERS WILL MAKE THAT FINAL JOURNEY WITH US!
AS RENYA PREPARED FOR DEATH, HE FELT RENEWED CONFIDENCE IN HIS SWORDS AND SPOKE TO HIMSELF
I HAVE FOUGHT THROUGH HARDSHIPS SINCE INFANCY! IF I USE THE TIME-DEVELOPED TECHNIQUES OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE PROPERLY, EVEN IF A THOUSAND MEN SHOULD CONFRONT ME...
NOT A SINGLE BLADE SHALL TOUCH ME!

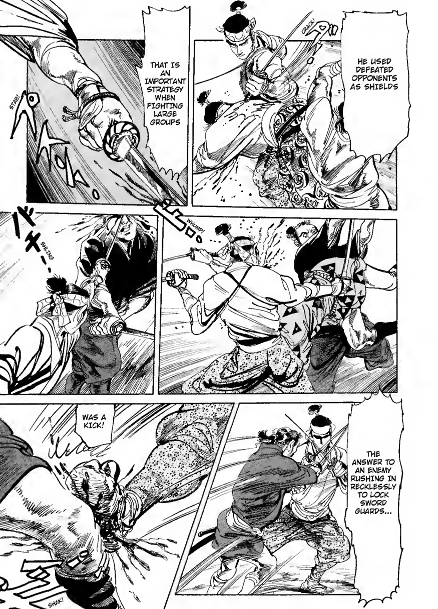

RUSTLE!
IS YAGYU HERE?!
SKIFF!
THUMP!

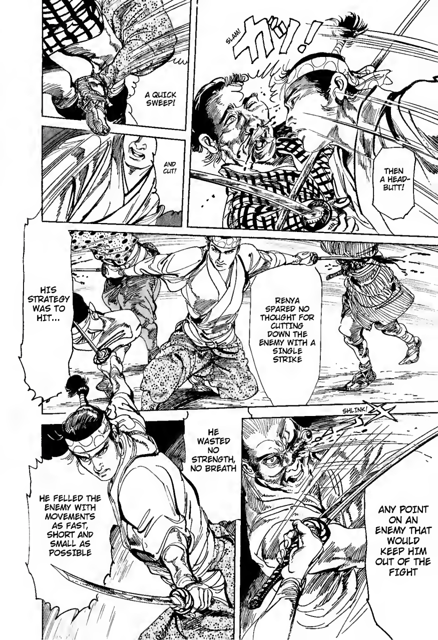

RENYA FOCUSED MORE ON CUTTING BOWSTRINGS THAN ENEMIES
YOU!
ドド!
RUMBLE
SHLICK!
PING!
WHOOSH

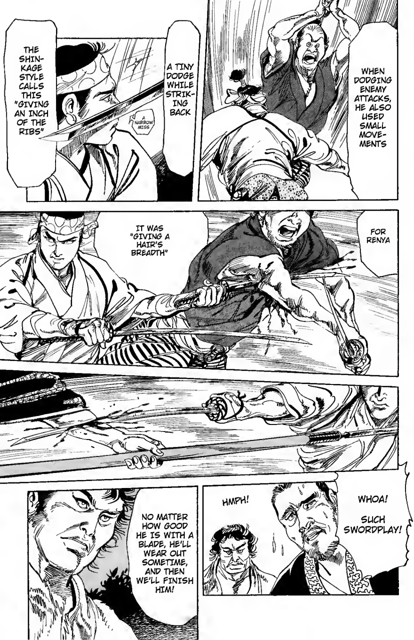

MORE THAN TEN BANDITS WERE FELLED IN AN INSTANT!
SKIFF!
HEAR ME!
HAND OVER THE WOMAN, OR I WILL MAKE A MOUNTAIN OF YOUR CORPSES!

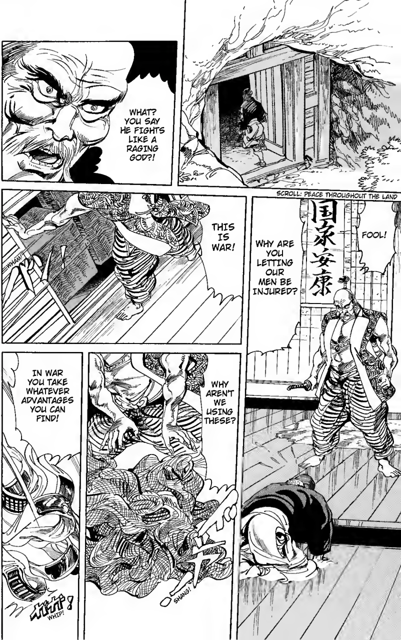

ATTACK!
GROUP ONE!
BRAZEN FOOL!
OVER A DOZEN MEN SURROUNDED RENYA, FORMING A RING THAT CLOSED TIGHTER AND TIGHTER AROUND HIM
KYAAH!
IF THE ENEMY FORMS A RING AROUND YOU, THE BEST STRATEGY IS TO BREAK THAT RING
RENYA RACED FORWARD AND CUT DOWN A PAIR OF THEM, RUINING THEIR FORMATION

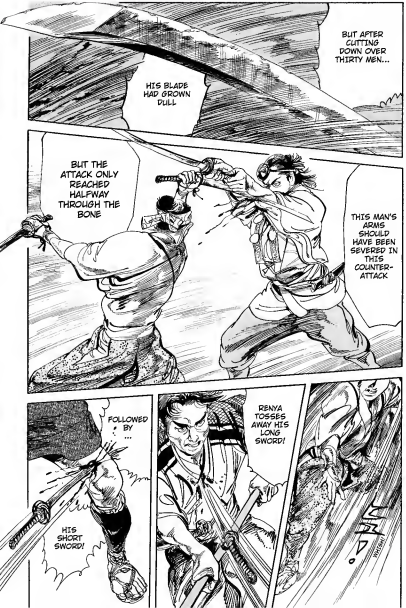

NO MATTER WHAT DIRECTION THE ENEMY CAME FROM OR IN WHAT MANNER THEY ATTACKED, RENYA REACTED AS THOUGH HE HAD EYES IN THE BACK OF HIS HEAD
HE WAS INFACT ENTICING THEM INTO ATTACK
THE MOMENT THE ENEMY STEPPED FORWARD TO STRIKE AT HIM, THEY WERE CAUGHT IN HIS TRAP
ALL HE HAD TO DO AFTER THAT WAS WAVE HIS SWORD AS HE HAD PRACTICED
SWISH!
GROUP TWO!
ATTACK FROM THE SLOPES!
NO MATTER HOW THE ENEMY CAME AT HIM...
RENYA WAS ALREADY TWO STEPS AHEAD OF THEM
WHAM
SLASH!

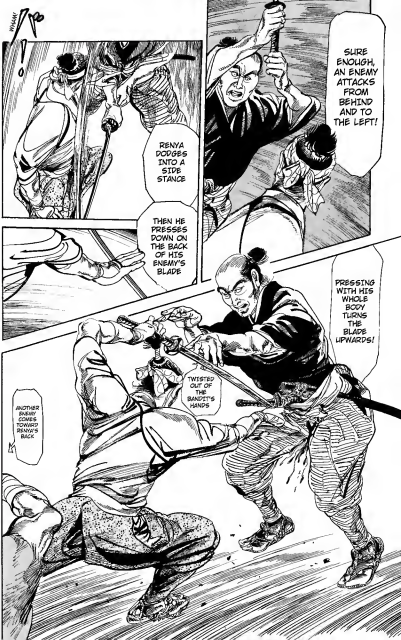

HE USED DEFEATED OPPONENTS AS SHIELDS
CRACK!
THAT IS AN IMPORTANT STRATEGY WHEN FIGHTING LARGE GROUPS
STAB!
WHUMP!
SHLING
THE ANSWER TO AN ENEMY RUSHING IN RECKLESSLY TO LOCK SWORD GUARDS...
WAS A KICK!
SHAK!

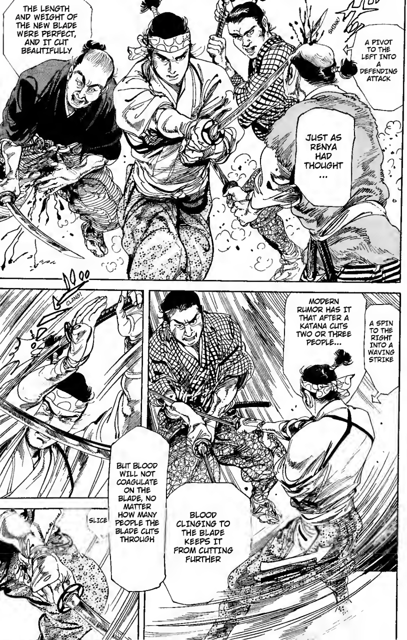

A QUICK SWEEP!
AND CUT!
SLAM!
ガッ!
THEN A HEAD-BUTT!
RENYA SPARED NO THOUGHT FOR CUTTING DOWN THE ENEMY WITH A SINGLE STRIKE
HIS STRATEGY WAS TO HIT...
SHLINK!
ANY POINT ON AN ENEMY THAT WOULD KEEP HIM OUT OF THE FIGHT
HE WASTED NO STRENGTH, NO BREATH
HE FELLED THE ENEMY WITH MOVEMENTS AS FAST, SHORT AND SMALL AS POSSIBLE

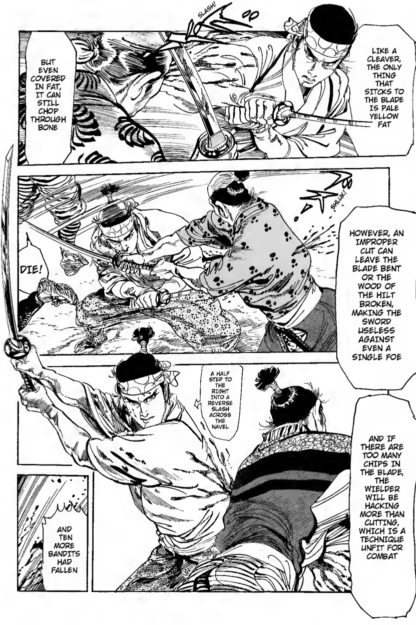

WHEN DODGING ENEMY ATTACKS, HE ALSO USED SMALL MOVEMENTS
A TINY DODGE WHILE STRIKING BACK
A NARROW MISS
THE SHINKAGE STYLE CALLS THIS "GIVING AN INCH OF THE RIBS"
FOR RENYA
IT WAS "GIVING A HAIR'S BREADTH"
WHOA!
SUCH SWORDPLAY!
HMPH!
NO MATTER HOW GOOD HE IS WITH A BLADE, HE'LL WEAR OUT SOMETIME, AND THEN WE'LL FINISH HIM!

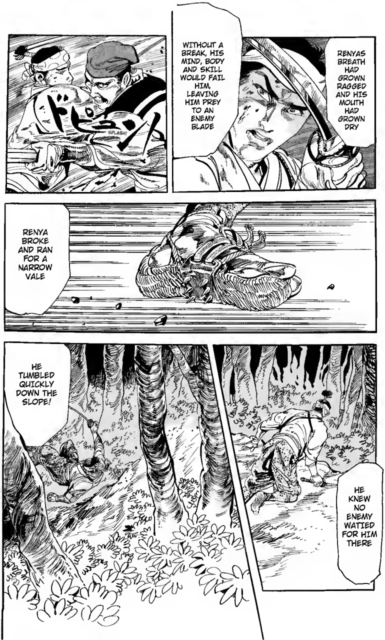

WHAT? YOU SAY HE FIGHTS LIKE A RAGING GOD?!
SCROLL: PEACE THROUGHOUT THE LAND
国家安康
FOOL!
WHY ARE YOU LETTING OUR MEN BE INJURED?
THIS IS WAR!
WHAM
WHY AREN'T WE USING THESE?
SHANG!
IN WAR YOU TAKE WHATEVER ADVANTAGES YOU CAN FIND!
WHIP!

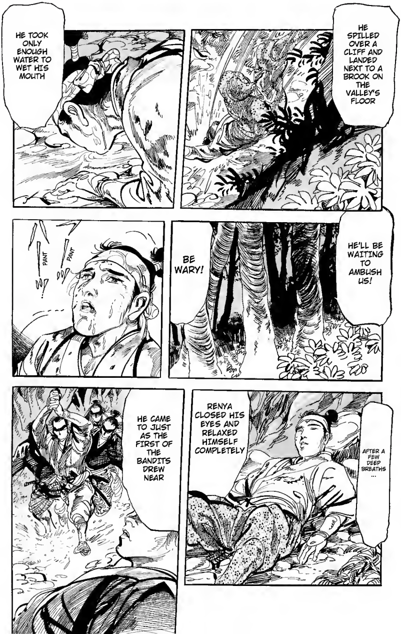

BUT AFTER CUTTING DOWN OVER THIRTY MEN...
HIS BLADE HAD GROWN DULL
THIS MAN'S ARMS SHOULD HAVE BEEN SEVERED IN THIS COUNTER-ATTACK
BUT THE ATTACK ONLY REACHED HALFWAY THROUGH THE BONE
WHISH!
RENYA TOSSES AWAY HIS LONG SWORD!
FOLLOWED BY ...
HIS SHORT SWORD!

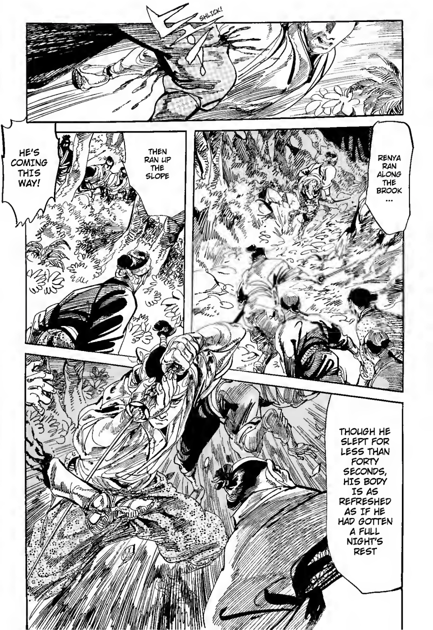

SURE ENOUGH, AN ENEMY ATTACKS FROM BEHIND AND TO THE LEFT!
WHAM!
RENYA DODGES INTO A SIDE STANCE
THEN HE PRESSES DOWN ON THE BACK OF HIS ENEMY'S BLADE
PRESSING WITH HIS WHOLE BODY TURNS THE BLADE UPWARDS!
TWISTED OUT OF THE BANDIT'S HANDS
ANOTHER ENEMY COMES TOWARD RENYA'S BACK

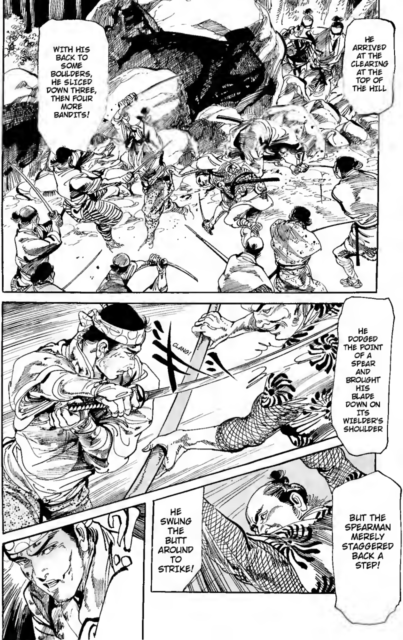

SHINK!
A PIVOT TO THE LEFT INTO A DEFENDING ATTACK
JUST AS RENYA HAD THOUGHT ...
THE LENGTH AND WEIGHT OF THE NEW BLADE WERE PERFECT, AND IT CUT BEAUTIFULLY
A SPIN TO THE RIGHT INTO A WAVING STRIKE
MODERN RUMOR HAS IT THAT AFTER A KATANA CUTS TWO OR THREE PEOPLE...
BLOOD CLINGING TO THE BLADE KEEPS IT FROM CUTTING FURTHER
BUT BLOOD WILL NOT COAGULATE ON THE BLADE, NO MATTER HOW MANY PEOPLE THE BLADE CUTS THROUGH
CLANG!
SLICE

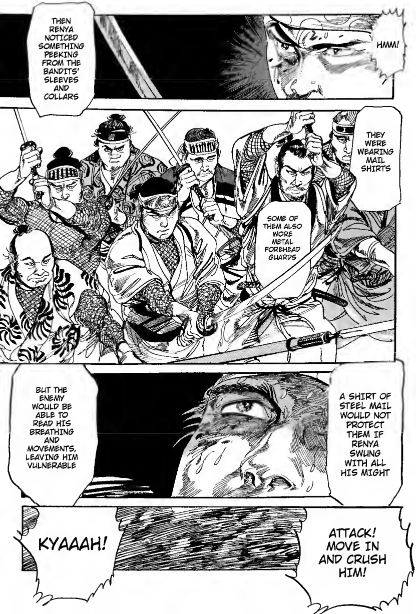

SLASH!
LIKE A CLEAVER, THE ONLY THING THAT SITCKS TO THE BLADE IS PALE YELLOW FAT
BUT EVEN COVERED IN FAT, IT CAN STILL CHOP THROUGH BONE
SHLUK!
HOWEVER, AN IMPROPER CUT CAN LEAVE THE BLADE BENT OR THE WOOD OF THE HILT BROKEN, MAKING THE SWORD USELESS AGAINST EVEN A SINGLE FOE
DIE!
AND IF THERE ARE TOO MANY CHIPS IN THE BLADE, THE WIELDER WILL BE HACKING MORE THAN CUTTING, WHICH IS A TECHNIQUE UNFIT FOR COMBAT
A HALF STEP TO THE RIGHT INTO A REVERSE SLASH ACROSS THE NAVEL
AND TEN MORE BANDITS HAD FALLEN

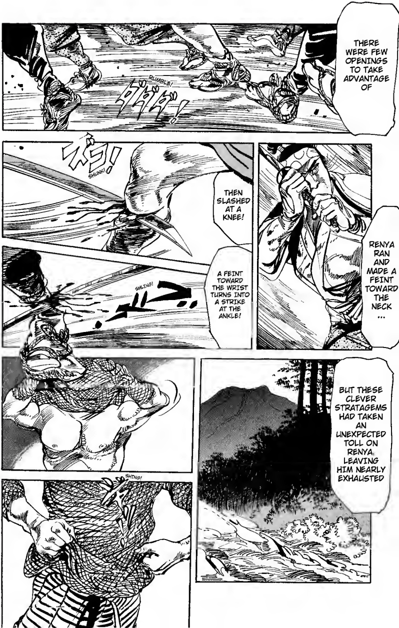

RENYAS BREATH HAD GROWN RAGGED AND HIS MOUTH HAD GROWN DRY
WITHOUT A BREAK, HIS MIND, BODY AND SKILL WOULD FAIL HIM, LEAVING HIM PREY TO AN ENEMY BLADE
ドピュン
SPLASH!
RENYA BROKE AND RAN FOR A NARROW VALE
HE KNEW NO ENEMY WATIED FOR HIM THERE
HE TUMBLED QUICKLY DOWN THE SLOPE!

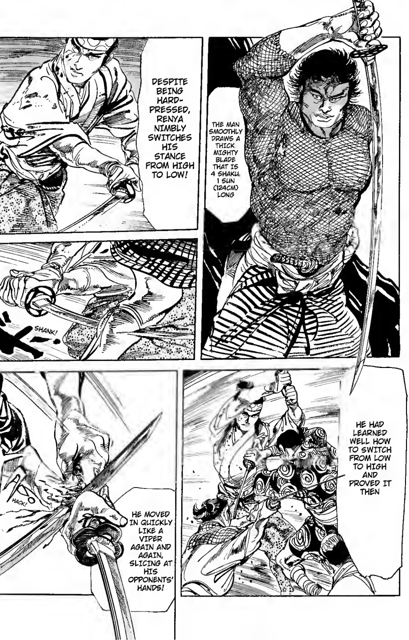

HE SPILLED OVER A CLIFF AND LANDED NEXT TO A BROOK ON THE VALLEY'S FLOOR
HE TOOK ONLY ENOUGH WATER TO WET HIS MOUTH
HE'LL BE WAITING TO AMBUSH US!
BE WARY!
PANT
PANT
AFTER A FEW DEEP BREATHS ...
RENYA CLOSED HIS EYES AND RELAXED HIMSELF COMPLETELY
HE CAME TO JUST AS THE FIRST OF THE BANDITS DREW NEAR

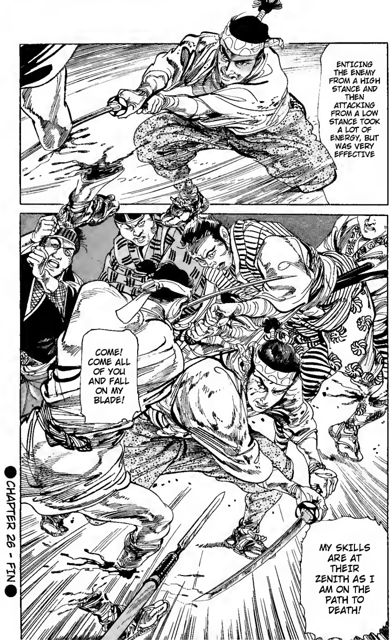

SHLICK!
RENYA RAN ALONG THE BROOK ...
THEN RAN UP THE SLOPE
HE'S COMING THIS WAY!
THOUGH HE SLEPT FOR LESS THAN FORTY SECONDS, HIS BODY IS AS REFRESHED AS IF HE HAD GOTTEN A FULL NIGHT'S REST


HE ARRIVED AT THE CLEARING AT THE TOP OF THE HILL
WITH HIS BACK TO SOME BOULDERS, HE SLICED DOWN THREE, THEN FOUR MORE BANDITS!
HE DODGED THE POINT OF A SPEAR AND BROUGHT HIS BLADE DOWN ON ITS WIELDER'S SHOULDER
CLANG!
BUT THE SPEARMAN MERELY STAGGERED BACK A STEP!
HE SWUNG THE BUTT AROUND TO STRIKE!


HMM!
THEN RENYA NOTICED SOMETHING PEEKING FROM THE BANDITS' SLEEVES AND COLLARS
THEY WERE WEARING MAIL SHIRTS
SOME OF THEM ALSO WORE METAL FOREHEAD GUARDS
A SHIRT OF STEEL MAIL WOULD NOT PROTECT THEM IF RENYA SWUNG WITH ALL HIS MIGHT
BUT THE ENEMY WOULD BE ABLE TO READ HIS BREATHING AND MOVEMENTS, LEAVING HIM VULNERABLE
ATTACK! MOVE IN AND CRUSH HIM!
KYAAAH!

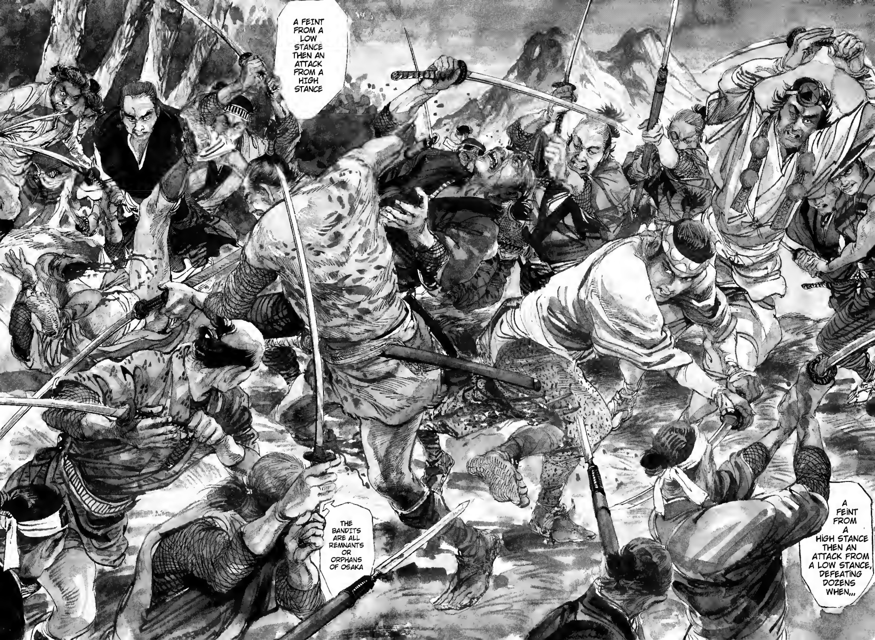

THERE WERE FEW OPENINGS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF
RUMBLE!
RENYA RAN AND MADE A FEINT TOWARD THE NECK ...
THEN SLASHED AT A KNEE!
SHUNK!
A FEINT TOWARD THE WRIST TURNS INTO A STRIKE AT THE ANKLE!
SHLING!
BUT THESE CLEVER STRATAGEMS HAD TAKEN AN UNEXPECTED TOLL ON RENYA, LEAVING HIM NEARLY EXHAUSTED
SHING!

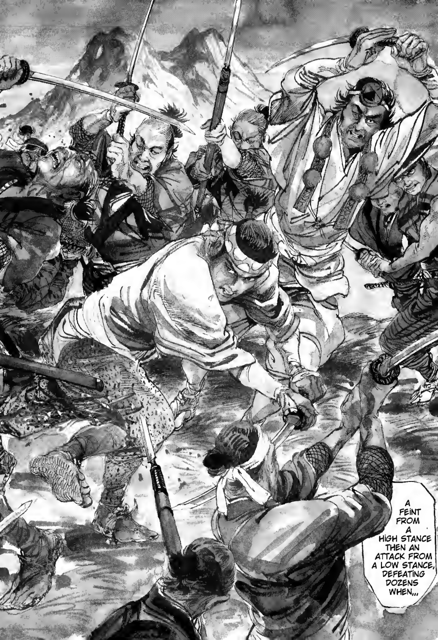

THE MAN SMOOTHLY DRAWS A THICK MIGHTY BLADE THAT IS 4 SHAKU, 1 SUN (124CM) LONG
DESPITE BEING HARD-PRESSED, RENYA NIMBLY SWITCHES HIS STANCE FROM HIGH TO LOW!
SHANK!
HE HAD LEARNED WELL HOW TO SWITCH FROM LOW TO HIGH AND PROVED IT THEN
HACK!
HE MOVED IN QUICKLY LIKE A VIPER AGAIN AND AGAIN, SLICING AT HIS OPPONENTS' HANDS!

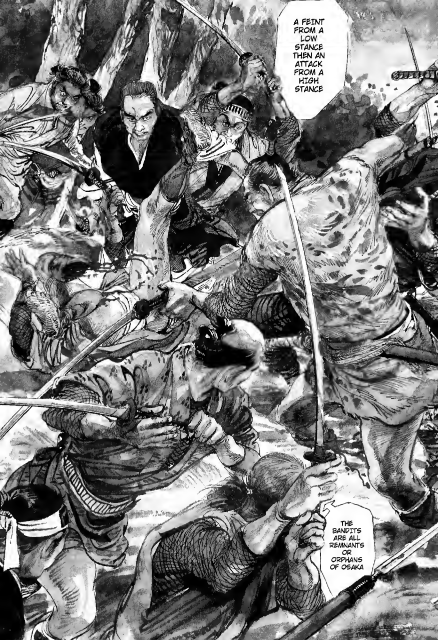

ENTICING THE ENEMY FROM A HIGH STANCE AND THEN ATTACKING FROM A LOW STANCE TOOK A LOT OF ENERGY, BUT WAS VERY EFFECTIVE
COME! COME ALL OF YOU AND FALL ON MY BLADE!
MY SKILLS ARE AT THEIR ZENITH AS I AM ON THE PATH TO DEATH!
● CHAPTER 26 - FIN ●

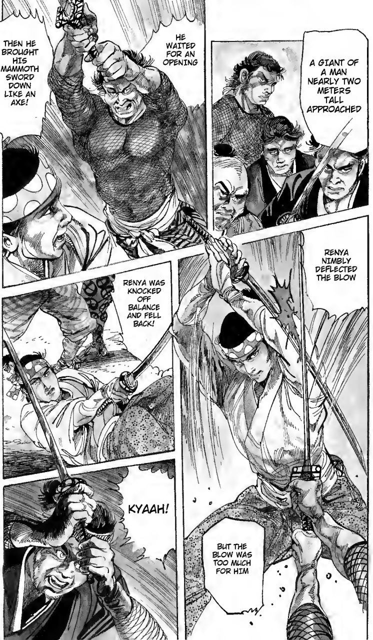
CHAPTER 27: TEAR-STAINED MOUNT HAKONE

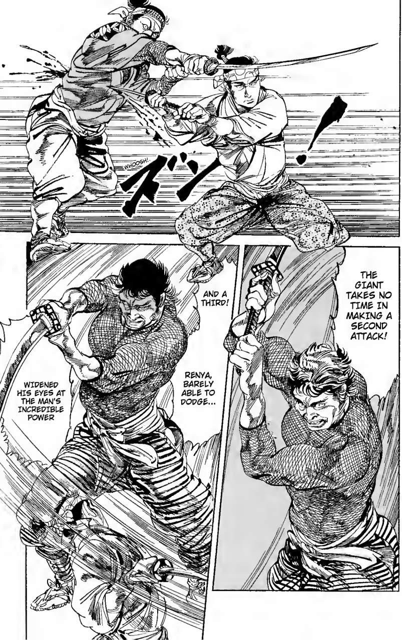
「第二十七話」
涙で濡れし箱根山

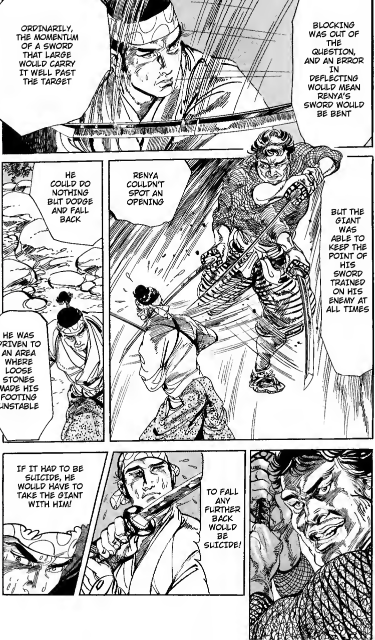

A FEINT FROM A LOW STANCE THEN AN ATTACK FROM A HIGH STANCE
A FEINT FROM A HIGH STANCE THEN AN ATTACK FROM A LOW STANCE, DEFEATING DOZENS WHEN,,,
THE BANDITS ARE ALL REMNANTS OR ORPHANS OF OSAKA

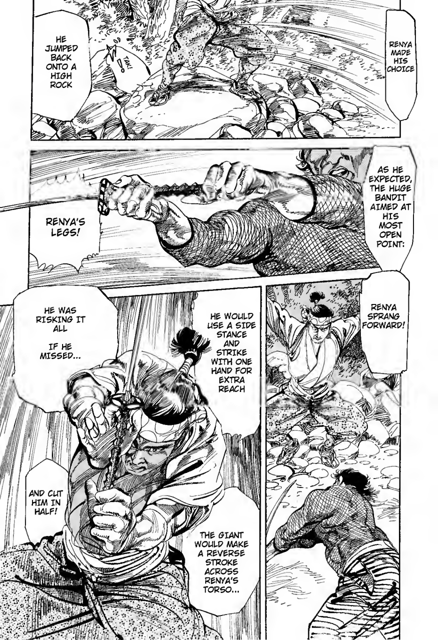

A FEINT FROM A HIGH STANCE THEN AN ATTACK FROM A LOW STANCE, DEFEATING DOZENS WHEN,,,

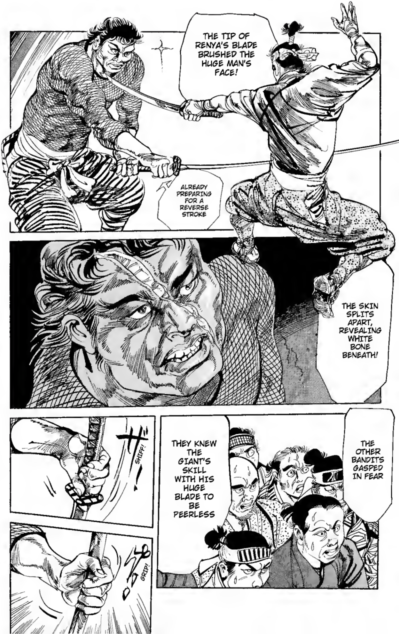

A FEINT FROM A LOW STANCE THEN AN ATTACK FROM A HIGH STANCE
THE BANDITS ARE ALL REMNANTS OR ORPHANS OF OSAKA

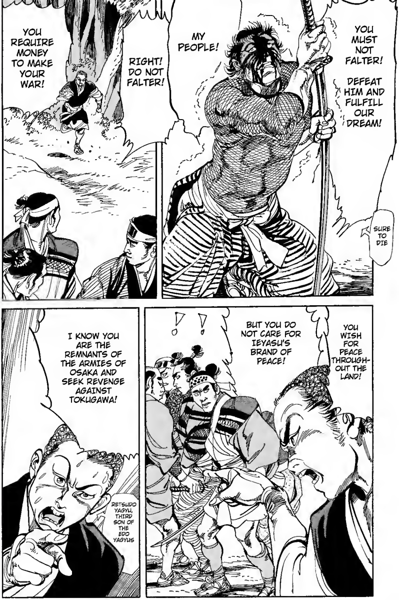

A GIANT OF A MAN NEARLY TWO METERS TALL APPROACHED
HE WAITED FOR AN OPENING
THEN HE BROUGHT HIS MAMMOTH SWORD DOWN LIKE AN AXE!
RENYA NIMBLY DEFLECTED THE BLOW
BUT THE BLOW WAS TOO MUCH FOR HIM
RENYA WAS KNOCKED OFF BALANCE AND FELL BACK!
KYAAH!

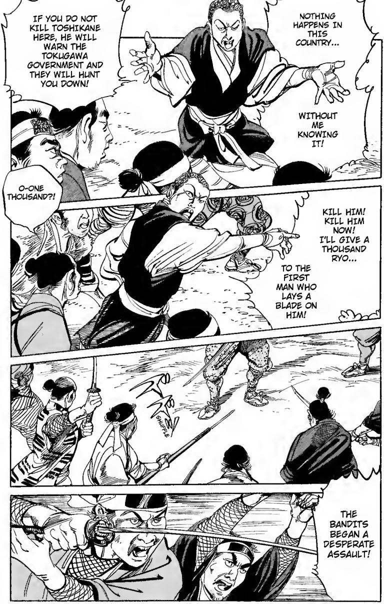

ズン
WHOOSH!
THE GIANT TAKES NO TIME IN MAKING A SECOND ATTACK!
AND A THIRD!
RENYA, BARELY ABLE TO DODGE...
WIDENED HIS EYES AT THE MAN'S INCREDIBLE POWER


BLOCKING WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION, AND AN ERROR IN DEFLECTING WOULD MEAN RENYA'S SWORD WOULD BE BENT
ORDINARILY, THE MOMENTUM OF A SWORD THAT LARGE WOULD CARRY IT WELL PAST THE TARGET
BUT THE GIANT WAS ABLE TO KEEP THE POINT OF HIS SWORD TRAINED ON HIS ENEMY AT ALL TIMES
RENYA COULDN'T SPOT AN OPENING
HE COULD DO NOTHING BUT DODGE AND FALL BACK
HE WAS DRIVEN TO AN AREA WHERE LOOSE STONES MADE HIS FOOTING UNSTABLE
TO FALL ANY FURTHER BACK WOULD BE SUICIDE!
IF IT HAD TO BE SUICIDE, HE WOULD HAVE TO TAKE THE GIANT WITH HIM!

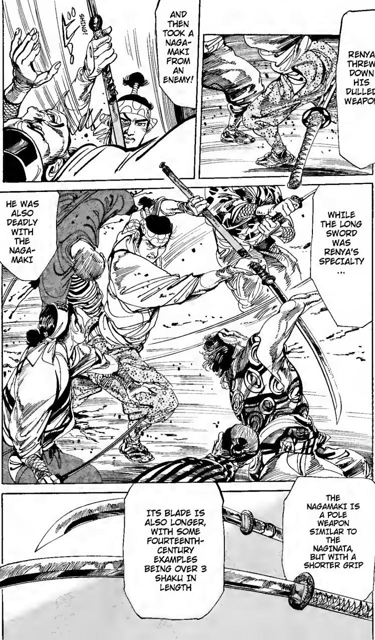

RENYA MADE HIS CHOICE
TAK!
HE JUMPED BACK ONTO A HIGH ROCK
AS HE EXPECTED, THE HUGE BANDIT AIMED AT HIS MOST OPEN POINT:
RENYA'S LEGS!
RENYA SPRANG FORWARD!
HE WOULD USE A SIDE STANCE AND STRIKE WITH ONE HAND FOR EXTRA REACH
HE WAS RISKING IT ALL IF HE MISSED...
THE GIANT WOULD MAKE A REVERSE STROKE ACROSS RENYA'S TORSO...
AND CUT HIM IN HALF!

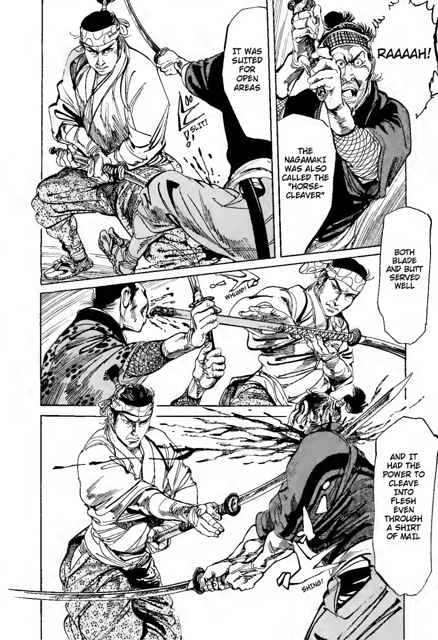

THE TIP OF RENYA'S BLADE BRUSHED THE HUGE MAN'S FACE!
ALREADY PREPARING FOR A REVERSE STROKE
THE SKIN SPLITS APART, REVEALING WHITE BONE BENEATH!
THE OTHER BANDITS GASPED IN FEAR
THEY KNEW THE GIANT'S SKILL WITH HIS HUGE BLADE TO BE PEERLESS
SHIFF!
GRIP!

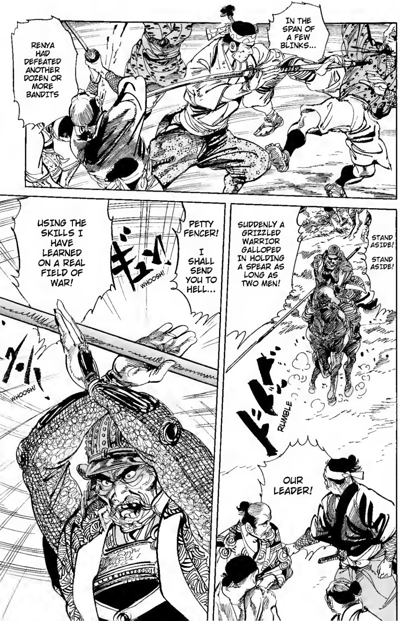

YOU REQUIRE MONEY TO MAKE YOUR WAR!
RIGHT! DO NOT FALTER!
MY PEOPLE!
YOU MUST NOT FALTER!
DEFEAT HIM AND FULFILL OUR DREAM!
SURE TO DIE
I KNOW YOU ARE THE REMNANTS OF THE ARMIES OF OSAKA AND SEEK REVENGE AGAINST TOKUGAWA!
RETSUDO YAGYU, THIRD SON OF THE EDO YAGYUS
YOU WISH FOR PEACE THROUGHOUT THE LAND!
BUT YOU DO NOT CARE FOR IEYASU'S BRAND OF PEACE!

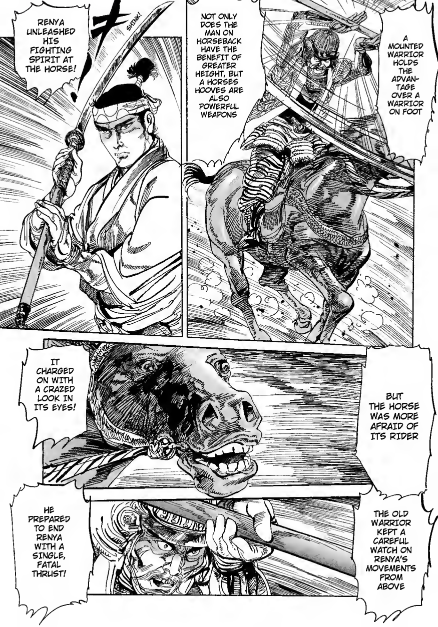

NOTHING HAPPENS IN THIS COUNTRY...
WITHOUT ME KNOWING IT!
IF YOU DO NOT KILL TOSHIKANE HERE, HE WILL WARN THE TOKUGAWA GOVERNMENT AND THEY WILL HUNT YOU DOWN!
KILL HIM! KILL HIM NOW! I'LL GIVE A THOUSAND RYO...
TO THE FIRST MAN WHO LAYS A BLADE ON HIM!
O-ONE THOUSAND?!
SHUFFLE
THE BANDITS BEGAN A DESPERATE ASSAULT!

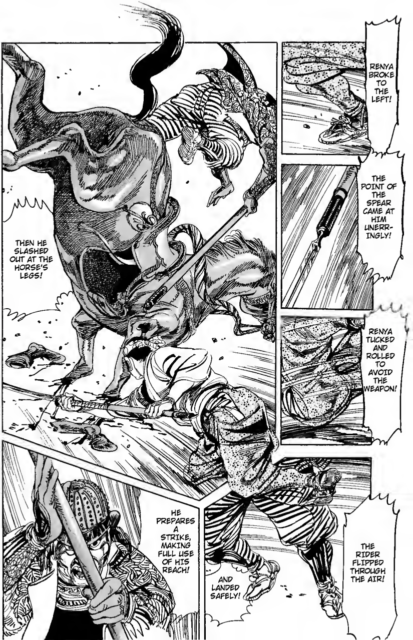
*TOSHIKANE YAGYU WOULD BECOME RENYASAI YAGYU

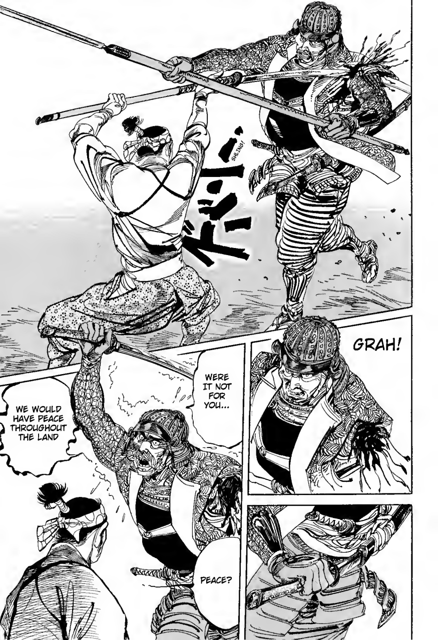

RENYA THREW DOWN HIS DULLED WEAPON
AND THEN TOOK A NAGAMAKI FROM AN ENEMY!
SHING!
WHILE THE LONG SWORD WAS RENYA'S SPECIALTY ...
HE WAS ALSO DEADLY WITH THE NAGAMAKI
THE NAGAMAKI IS A POLE WEAPON SIMILAR TO THE NAGINATA, BUT WITH A SHORTER GRIP
ITS BLADE IS ALSO LONGER, WITH SOME FOURTEENTH-CENTURY EXAMPLES BEING OVER 3 SHAKU IN LENGTH

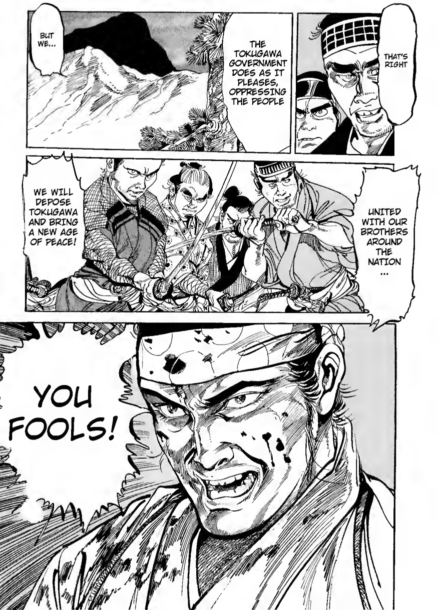

RAAAAH!
THE NAGAMAKI WAS ALSO CALLED THE "HORSE-CLEAVER"
IT WAS SUITED FOR OPEN AREAS
SLIT!
BOTH BLADE AND BUTT SERVED WELL
WHUMP!
AND IT HAD THE POWER TO CLEAVE INTO FLESH EVEN THROUGH A SHIRT OF MAIL
SHING!

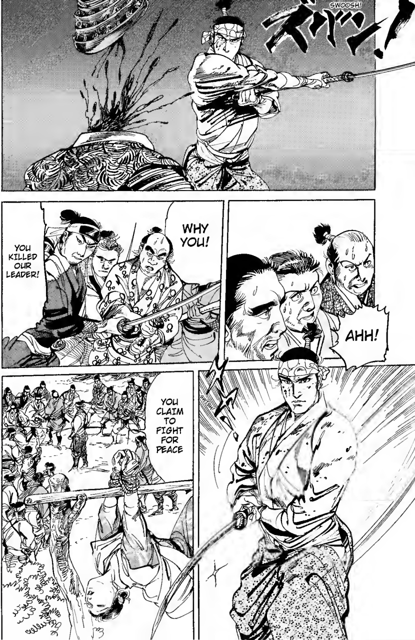

IN THE SPAN OF A FEW BLINKS...
RENYA HAD DEFEATED ANOTHER DOZEN OR MORE BANDITS
SUDDENLY A GRIZZLED WARRIOR GALLOPED IN HOLDING A SPEAR AS LONG AS TWO MEN!
STAND ASIDE!
STAND ASIDE!
RUMBLE
OUR LEADER!
PETTY FENCER!
I SHALL SEND YOU TO HELL...
USING THE SKILLS I HAVE LEARNED ON A REAL FIELD OF WAR!
WHOOSH!
WHOOSH!

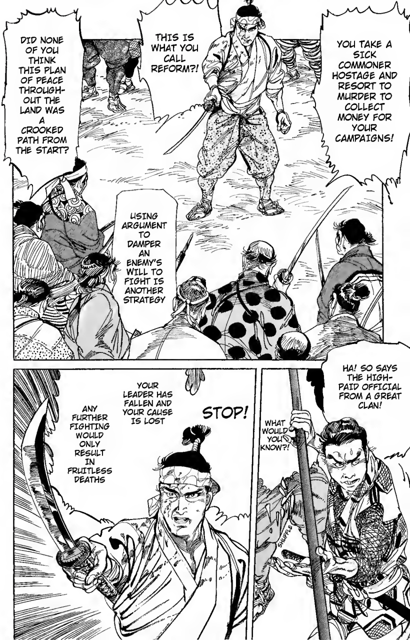

A MOUNTED WARRIOR HOLDS THE ADVANTAGE OVER A WARRIOR ON FOOT
NOT ONLY DOES THE MAN ON HORSEBACK HAVE THE BENEFIT OF GREATER HEIGHT, BUT A HORSES HOOVES ARE ALSO POWERFUL WEAPONS
SHINK!
RENYA UNLEASHED HIS FIGHTING SPIRIT AT THE HORSE!
BUT THE HORSE WAS MORE AFRAID OF ITS RIDER
IT CHARGED ON WITH A CRAZED LOOK IN ITS EYES!
THE OLD WARRIOR KEPT A CAREFUL WATCH ON RENYA'S MOVEMENTS FROM ABOVE
HE PREPARED TO END RENYA WITH A SINGLE, FATAL THRUST!

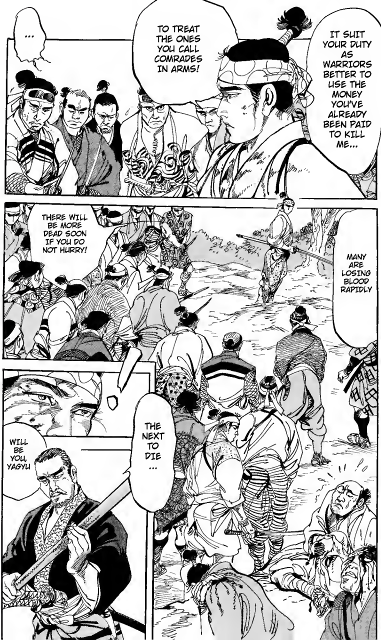

RENYA BROKE TO THE LEFT!
THE POINT OF THE SPEAR CAME AT HIM UNERRINGLY!
RENYA TUCKED AND ROLLED TO AVOID THE WEAPON!
THEN HE SLASHED OUT AT THE HORSE'S LEGS!
THE RIDER FLIPPED THROUGH THE AIR!
AND LANDED SAFELY!
HE PREPARES A STRIKE, MAKING FULL USE OF HIS REACH!

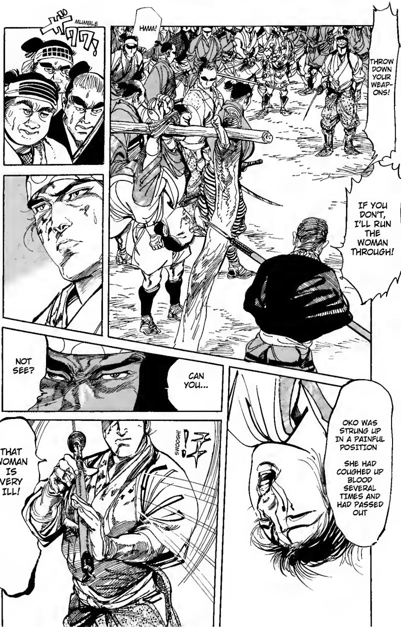

SHLING!
GRAH!
WERE IT NOT FOR YOU...
WE WOULD HAVE PEACE THROUGHOUT THE LAND
PEACE?

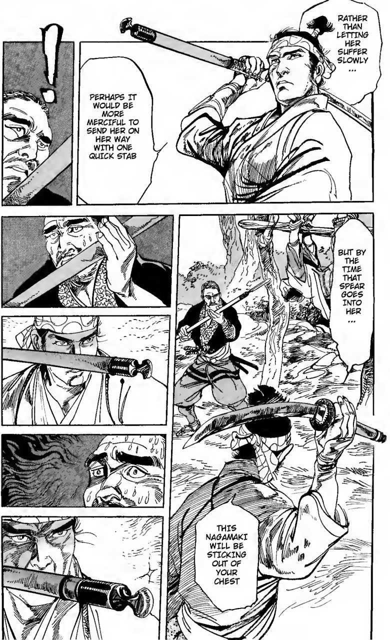

THAT'S RIGHT
THE TOKUGAWA GOVERNMENT DOES AS IT PLEASES, OPPRESSING THE PEOPLE
BUT WE...
UNITED WITH OUR BROTHERS AROUND THE NATION ...
WE WILL DEPOSE TOKUGAWA AND BRING A NEW AGE OF PEACE!
YOU FOOLS!

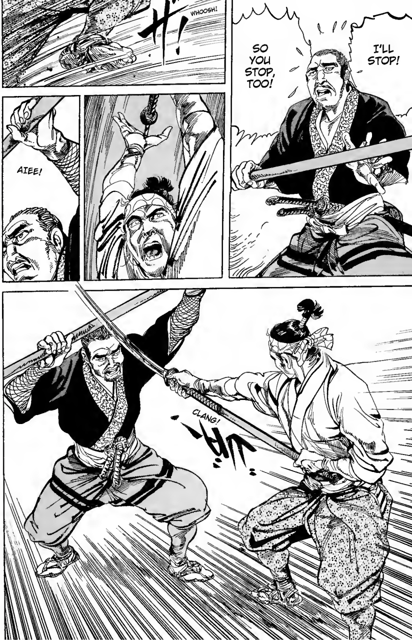

SWOOSH!
ズバン!
YOU KILLED OUR LEADER!
WHY YOU!
AHH!
YOU CLAIM TO FIGHT FOR PEACE
SWISH

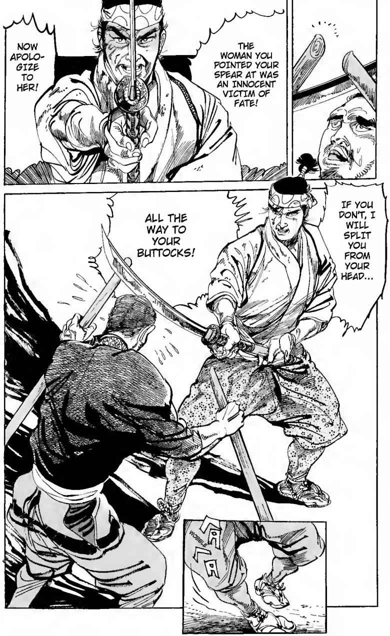

THIS IS WHAT YOU CALL REFORM?!
YOU TAKE A SICK COMMONER HOSTAGE AND RESORT TO MURDER TO COLLECT MONEY FOR YOUR CAMPAIGNS!
DID NONE OF YOU THINK THIS PLAN OF PEACE THROUGHOUT THE LAND WAS A CROOKED PATH FROM THE START?
USING ARGUMENT TO DAMPER AN ENEMY'S WILL TO FIGHT IS ANOTHER STRATEGY
STOP!
YOUR LEADER HAS FALLEN AND YOUR CAUSE IS LOST
ANY FURTHER FIGHTING WOULD ONLY RESULT IN FRUITLESS DEATHS
HA! SO SAYS THE HIGH-PAID OFFICIAL FROM A GREAT CLAN!
WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW?!
SHUFFLE

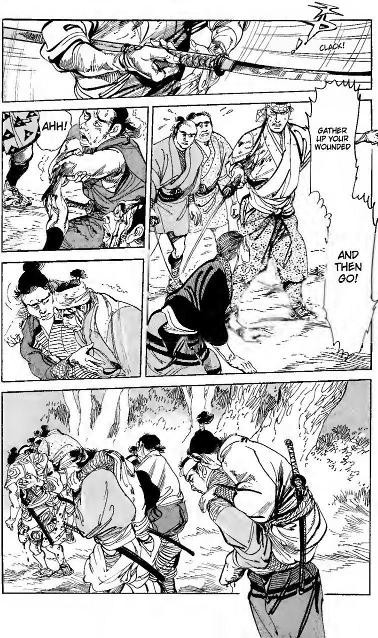

IT SUIT YOUR DUTY AS WARRIORS BETTER TO USE THE MONEY YOU'VE ALREADY BEEN PAID TO KILL ME...
TO TREAT THE ONES YOU CALL COMRADES IN ARMS!
...
MANY ARE LOSING BLOOD RAPIDLY
THERE WILL BE MORE DEAD SOON IF YOU DO NOT HURRY!
THE NEXT TO DIE ...
WILL BE YOU, YAGYU

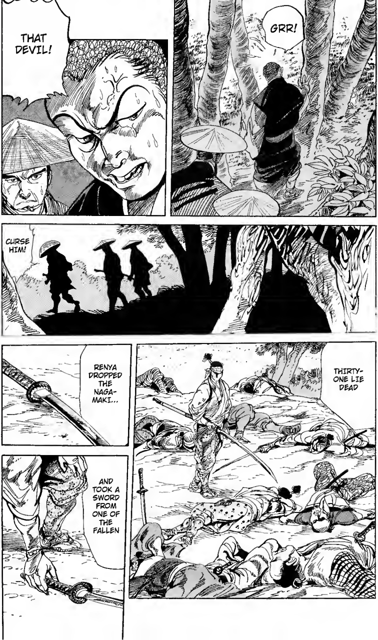

HMM!
THROW DOWN YOUR WEAPONS!
IF YOU DON'T, I'LL RUN THE WOMAN THROUGH!
MUMBLE
CAN YOU...
NOT SEE?
OKO WAS STRUNG UP IN A PAINFUL POSITION
SHE HAD COUGHED UP BLOOD SEVERAL TIMES AND HAD PASSED OUT
SWOOSH!
THAT WOMAN IS VERY ILL!

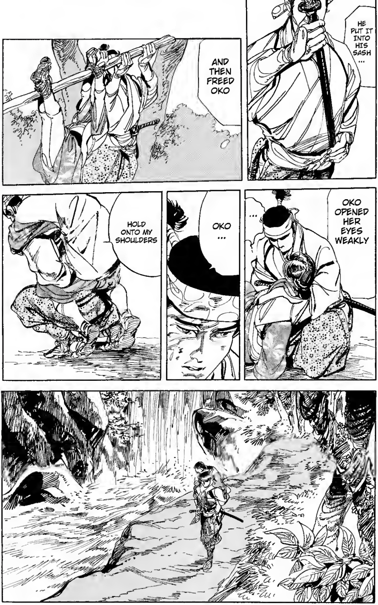

RATHER THAN LETTING HER SUFFER SLOWLY ...
PERHAPS IT WOULD BE MORE MERCIFUL TO SEND HER ON HER WAY WITH ONE QUICK STAB
!
BUT BY THE TIME THAT SPEAR GOES INTO HER ...
THIS NAGAMAKI WILL BE STICKING OUT OF YOUR CHEST

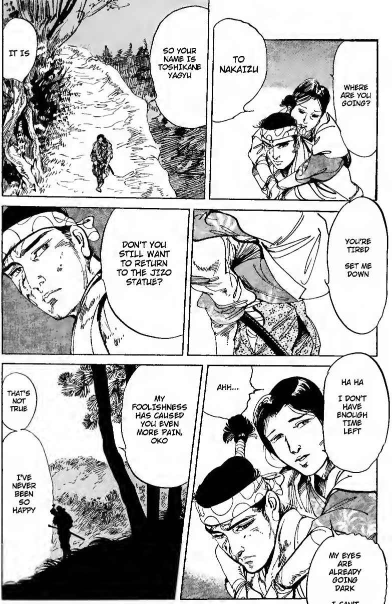

I'LL STOP!
SO YOU STOP, TOO!
WHOOSH!
AIEE!
CLANG!

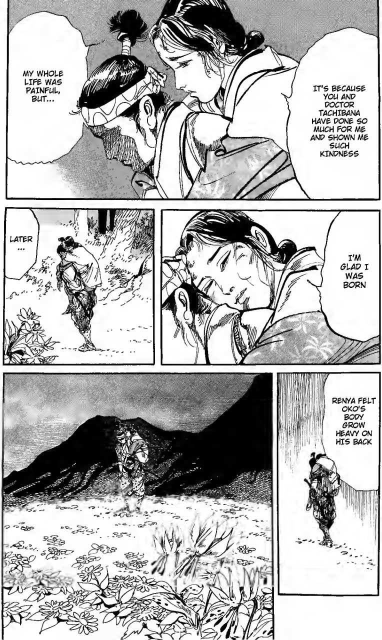

THE WOMAN YOU POINTED YOUR SPEAR AT WAS AN INNOCENT VICTIM OF FATE!
NOW APOLOGIZE TO HER!
IF YOU DON'T, I WILL SPLIT YOU FROM YOUR HEAD...
ALL THE WAY TO YOUR BUTTOCKS!
WOBBLE

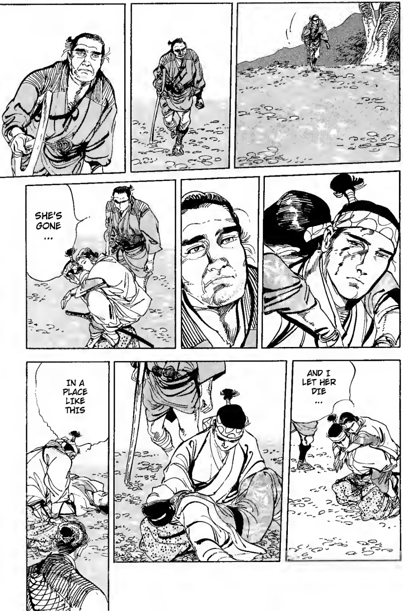

CLACK!
GATHER UP YOUR WOUNDED
AND THEN GO!
AHH!

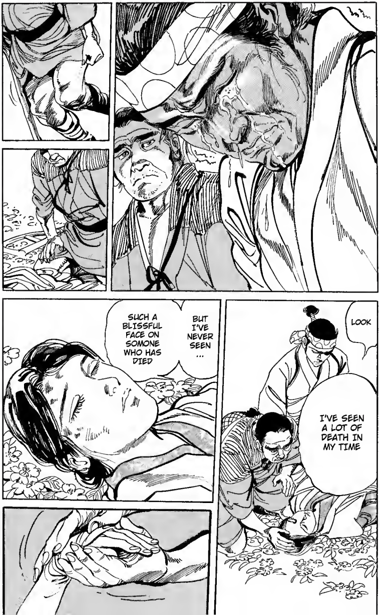

THAT DEVIL!
GRR!
CURSE HIM!
RENYA DROPPED THE NAGAMAKI...
AND TOOK A SWORD FROM ONE OF THE FALLEN
THIRTY-ONE LIE DEAD

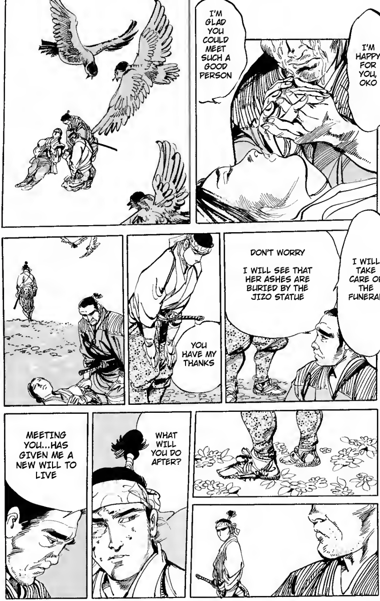

HE PUT IT INTO HIS SASH ...
AND THEN FREED OKO
OKO OPENED HER EYES WEAKLY
...
OKO ...
HOLD ONTO MY SHOULDERS

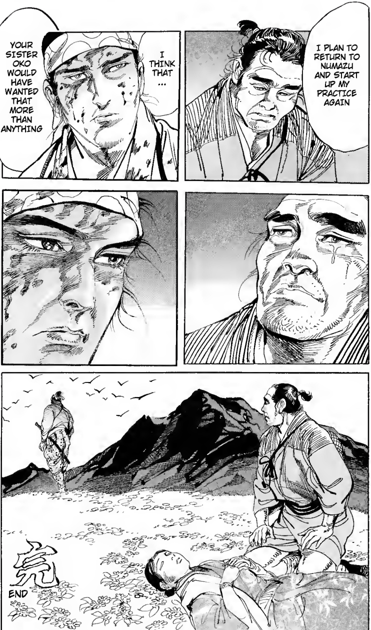

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO NAKAIZU
SO YOUR NAME IS TOSHIKANE YAGYU
IT IS
YOU'RE TIRED SET ME DOWN
DON'T YOU STILL WANT TO RETURN TO THE JIZO STATUE?
HA HA I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME LEFT
AHH...
MY EYES ARE ALREADY GOING DARK I CAN'T SEE
MY FOOLISHNESS HAS CAUSED YOU EVEN MORE PAIN, OKO
THAT'S NOT TRUE
I'VE NEVER BEEN SO HAPPY


MY WHOLE LIFE WAS PAINFUL, BUT...
IT'S BECAUSE YOU AND DOCTOR TACHIBANA HAVE DONE SO MUCH FOR ME AND SHOWN ME SUCH KINDNESS
LATER ...
I'M GLAD I WAS BORN
RENYA FELT OKO'S BODY GROW HEAVY ON HIS BACK


SHE'S GONE ...
IN A PLACE LIKE THIS
AND I LET HER DIE ...


LOOK
I'VE SEEN A LOT OF DEATH IN MY TIME
BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN ...
SUCH A BLISSFUL FACE ON SOMONE WHO HAS DIED


I'M HAPPY FOR YOU, OKO
I'M GLAD YOU COULD MEET SUCH A GOOD PERSON
I WILL TAKE CARE OF THE FUNERAL
DON'T WORRY I WILL SEE THAT HER ASHES ARE BURIED BY THE JIZO STATUE
YOU HAVE MY THANKS
WHAT WILL YOU DO AFTER?
MEETING YOU...HAS GIVEN ME A NEW WILL TO LIVE


I PLAN TO RETURN TO NUMAZU AND START UP MY PRACTICE AGAIN
I THINK THAT ...
YOUR SISTER OKO WOULD HAVE WANTED THAT MORE THAN ANYTHING
完
END

● CHAPTER 27 - FIN ●

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